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THE MODERN PEDAGOGUE.

THE
MODERN PEDAGOGUE;
OR,
RUSTIC REMINISCENCES.

BY J. RHYS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOLUME II.

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THE MODERN PEDAGOGUE.

CHAPTER I.

" Which is the villain ? Let me see his eyes ;
That when I note another man like him,
I may avoid him."

Shakespeare.

As Snipp dug the grave for the remains of Miss Rachel, and feeling a little tired, he halted on his spade, and commenced soliloquizing as usual,—" What a good thing it is," he commenced, " that I am clerk and sexton to one of the parish churches, and not servant to a chapel of ease, as they call it; easy enough, perhaps, for the people, but precious uneasy for the clerk, who has a wife and children to feed. But still they say they get the right thing up there. Mr. Clearview, I fancy, don't chaff them all, but sows a good deal of genuine corn. I will go up and hear him myself some Sunday evening when

this is closed. I don't know how it is, I pay everybody, and am as kind as I know how to my neighbour, and I am anxious to do my duty in every way, but there it ends ; it don't seem to profit me much. They say Christians are a happy people on all occasions, under all circumstances ; but now I am not exactly that. I do all I am told by our pa'son, Mr. Allaway, but there I am left,—I don't seem to have much hope. Now, there's Farmer Brunt seems to be ready and waiting for every change ; and they say that Miss Rachel was downright happy when she thought of coming here. But I don't feel ready like that yet ; come it must, some day ; what I am always doing for others, some one will have to do for me before long at the farthest. My thinks Mr. Allaway got too much turning and twisting ; too much bother and candles, and too particular about christenings. I wonder what candles can have to do with religion ; with the soul ? My mind, it must be precious dark where candlelight is found necessary ; two candles half a yard long stuck upon the Communion, looking of all the world like two ghosts on a common,—'pon my word now, I feel half ashamed when I stick them up ; for it's only candlelight after all,— seems to me to be too much child's-play about it for serious, thoughtful men, as Englishmen ought

to be. It might fit Mr. French very well, but doesn't go down at all with English Snipp. These youngsters from college," he continued, "seem to me to have caught a shadow and lost the substance; it seems extraordinary that learning should make greater flats of some people; why it ought to strengthen the mind, not weaken it. But according to what they say, Mr. Clearview up yonder gives them real religion; he has none of these fashionable quirks about him. But here comes Mr. Allaway, walking as fast as ever; by gore, if he ain't perpetual motion defined, and no mistake! I wonder now what is his business?"

"This grave, Snipp, is for Farmer Brunt's sister, is it not?" commenced the clergyman.

"Yes, Sir, yes, Sir; it is, Sir; it is, Sir," replied Snipp.

"Do you remember that affair when they brought a corpse here before, Snipp?" inquired the clergyman again.

"What, and buried it themselves? I rather think I does, Sir," replied Snipp.

"Exactly, exactly," returned the clergyman. "Well, Snipp," said Mr. Allaway again, "see that everything is correct this time;" and away went the clergyman in the direction of the parsonage.

" See that all is right, indeed," repeated Snipp, as he took a quid of tobacco from his steel tobacco-box, and introduced it to his mouth. " I wonder what he would say, if I made such a obserwation to him ? I believe all my part was correct enough then, wasn't it, eh ? Who was wrong, I wonder, on that occasion, master or man ? But he can come the talking part fast enough and loud enough, and bother to it ; it little affects my nerves. I don't know just the minute to put in the right answer ; but this is a fashionable way of talking great folks aim at, they say. But now, I think on't, Squire Meek, the richest man in these parts, doesn't come it all in a breath like that. But I take it in this way rather, that a drum makes the most noise in the band, and an empty cask makes the most sound when tapped, and an empty church produces the greatest echo. So everything I have seen coming from that young man has been empty too ; no, he is not a deep brook,—shallow, shallow enough ;" and Snipp commenced again, digging as if his life depended upon his exertions, when, presently, the minister disturbed him again, commencing,—

" Well, Snipp, I see you are still following your occupation ; I am confident you are a very industrious man. Be sure you let me have the proper notice ; Farmer Brunt, I find, is a very worthy parishioner."

"Yes, Sir ; he pays well up like," said Snipp ; giving a knowing look at the clergyman.

"Exactly so, exactly so ; quite right, Snipp, quite right. Good morning, Snipp ;" and away went the minister, wending his way between the graves as before, flourishing his cane, and whistling a little ditty as usual, as he progressed towards the parsonage.

Snipp dug on for some time after the departure of the minister, when feeling again tired, he stopped, stuck his spade firmly in the ground, rested upon it, and commenced, "Well, I rather like him ; a good-tempered, open-hearted young fellow he is, I am nearly sure of that ; and would do right, perhaps, if he had only been taught the way. But they say they are going to make a magistrate of him,—they intend giving him more power, eh ? Why, any fool can see that the law and Gospel don't agree,—a man that's a pa'son and a magistrate must be a perfect hybrid mongrel. I don't remember reading of Paul or Peter, or any of the fishermen having to execute the law of man. I don't remember reading of one giving six months, and another twelve, and committing for trial, and so on, some of the young chaps taken looking after game. There is nothing said about it in the Book ; maybe there was no game in that country, nor no laws to

protect it. My thinks it would be a good thing if there wer'n't any game in this one neither ; but there it helps to feed the law. Why, I honestly think there would be next to nothing doing at our quarter sessions, were it not for the game-laws. They cost the country a pretty penny, I fancy. Well, Snipp, they won't have thee up for that offence, anyhow ; for as for hares, I don't like them,—my taste is not aristocratic enough for that. I likes a rabbit, and pay my sixpence, and have done with it. But it does not fit me to see pa'sons magistrates. I wonder how they reconcile a few little facts in their code ? as, 'If thy enemy hunger, feed him, pray for him,' and all that, eh ? I consider this Gospel, not law. I dare say it is all right ; but pa'sons who ought to preach glad tidings of peace to the tried and tempted don't appear to be just the men, I repeat again, to say, 'Let them all have a month,' 'I'll commit them,' and the likes on't ; but they get over it somehow,—a little waiving, I reckon, sets all right ;" and the sexton commenced digging again as before.

Mr. Clearview called at the farmer's in order to pay the usual visit of condolence. "I am sorry, farmer," he commenced, "that I did not pay your sister another visit ; but certainly I did not apprehend her dissolution so near. But we

have much to be thankful for, removed as she has been from a world of trial to one of happiness and joy for ever. You do not mourn, farmer, as one without hope. I can sympathize with you, having been myself, more than once, in the furnace of affliction. But we must submit, like pious Job, when he said, ‘The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord;’” and after giving a few more words of encouragement, the minister again took an affectionate leave of the family.

But the farmer was much cut up by the death of his sister. “I don’t take a turn,” he remarked, “without feeling her absence; but I bless God,” he repeated, “that the mortal has put on immortality.”

Mr. Thomas Brunt felt the house of mourning rather a dull place, and so indeed it was for a person who had never studied any one or anything but himself; yet he endeavoured to divert his uncle’s mind by getting him to enter into some of the scenes with which he had been associated abroad. And poor Molly attentively watched the appetite of the farmer. “Master must eat,” she would say, as she brought in the apple-tarts which she had made, knowing him to be exceedingly fond of the same. “Master must not vex and give way so; laws, she’s better off

now ; she's gone up where the cold can't freeze her, nor the sun scorch her. I know she is, for I heard her talk so beautiful like when I gave her her medicine at nights, that it did me good to hear her."

Now Miss Vine, having accomplished satisfactorily all the purchases at Mr. Cotton's ; and the undertaker having nearly completed all his preparations for the funeral, which Farmer Brunt desired to be carried out in as plain and respectable manner as possible ; and all being ready, the corpse was conveyed to the regular burying-place of the family.

Mr. Allaway proved true to his duty on this occasion, and likewise Snipp, who stood, spade in hand, ready to administer the dub-a-dub, by dropping a little of the soil on the lid of the coffin when the minister should arrive at the important words, "ashes to ashes, dust to dust," in order to produce the necessary impressive feeling on the living mourners.

At the grave, the farmer and the Rev. Mr. Allaway shook hands, having there forgotten, as became them, all little differences of former times.

The funeral over, the party returned to Old Farm to tea, over which Miss Vine undertook to preside, and there they sat as serious and thoughtful as the

occasion demanded ; and at an early hour, after a parting blessing from Mr. Clearview, separated. And now it was that the house felt truly lonely ; before this, the preparations for the funeral, calls of visitors, etc., in order to condole with the bereaved, took off, in some degree, the dulness that naturally follows death's footsteps.

Tom and his uncle were now left to their own thoughts and reflections, which again and again reverted to the deceased relative. The farmer did not, however, fly to the world or the glass or other excitements, in order to obliterate the wholesome reflections ; for, as he observed, they did him good—taught him humility.

Tom felt sorrowful likewise ; for he, too, had a great partiality for his aunt. It is true he had been familiar with death, but now it came rather closer than usual ; but seeing his uncle a little down,

"Come, uncle," said he ; "let us go and see how the fat cattle are progressing."

"Never mind, boy, never mind," observed his uncle. "I dare say Jack has attended to them all right."

"Yes," repeated Tom ; "yet I think my nunkey should see them too."

"Right, boy, right ; we will go at once," said the farmer. "I am glad you are here, boy ; and

now you won't forget what you promised your aunt."

"No," replied Tom ; "I must remain with you, nunkey ; I don't think I can leave you. I think I must begin to leave off being selfish. I cannot leave you just now. I had an idea of seeing more of the world ; I thought of wandering over other seas, but I now bow to my nunkey's request and kind invitation for a time. This is a fine ox," said Tom, giving the animal a slap, which made the poor brute turn its head to look at the stranger.

"Yes," replied the farmer ; "mythinks he'll pay for keeping till Christmas." Then, passing on from one to another, remarked on the probability or otherwise of their making roast beef when the season of England's grand carnival should arrive. Then, moving into the stables, spoke to and caressed their favourites there ; especially old Jet, who received the usual salutation from her old master, which she in return was careful to acknowledge by taking the button of his coat in her mouth and making free with his hair. Crossing the yard, old Shepherd waited at the entrance of his kennel in order to welcome his master, whose absence he had been deplored for a few days.

"Well," said the farmer, "the oxen are

some pounds heavier than when I last saw them, and the osse^s don't look any the worse for a day or two's holiday."

"Old Jet seems to know you, nunkey," remarked Tom.

"Yes, boy, and well she might, for she has known me pretty well as long as yourself; but, like her master, age is playing sad havoc with her now; her ears, eyes, and legs are getting the worse for wear, but she keeps up in flesh, poor thing."

After breakfast the next morning, who should ride up to Old Farm but Mr. Sharp, who stated that he wished to see Farmer Brunt on particular business. Now, Sharp was a man of questionable character, from the county town, where he resided in a handsome, fashionable villa, keeping a large establishment of servants, horses, dogs, etc. Farmer Brunt had been in the habit of doing business with Sharp occasionally in corn, hay, straw, and other productions of the farm,—Sharp, on his part, being very exact in his payments and transactions with the farmer; therefore, so far, there was nothing to complain of. But still Sharp was a man for whom the farmer could not entertain any proper respect, for he, as the farmer said, did not get his money by honest industry, but by coming the sharp over a few

regular flats. There he stood, however, having dismounted, holding his thorough-bred steed, dressed, as usual, in long black coat, broad hat, Russian boots, and white necktie, dogskin gloves. On the ground lay two valuable greyhounds, panting with deep respirations, feeling rather overcome with fatigue, from the speed at which they had travelled.

Taking the exterior appearance of the man, therefore, as an index to the whole, Sharp might have been taken for a real gentleman. Alas ! how deceptive are appearances ! Not so ; Sharp was a gambler and man of the turf, which was not difficult to discover when in his company for a few moments, by detecting expressions used by the class of which he was a notorious leader.

"Well, Sharp ! how are you ? Come in, come in ; sit down, sit down," said the farmer.

"Well, Brunt my boy," returned that worthy, "I am glad to see you looking so young. You country folks look well on the invigorating fresh air, and the other good things you enjoy ; bothered if you don't beat us townspeople hollow, now that you do ! But you mustn't come it too strong over us poor weak-nerved devils ; we expect to see the country people as honest and liberal as the air they so freely enjoy, especially parsons ; such persons ought to be particular to

pay up to the day, and should keep their word and all that, Brunt, good men as they are. Eh? I am not like you, Brunt; I don't own any pet parsons; I like and respect a man just so far as he meets his liabilities and engagements. Only think now, there's that Mr. Allaway you stood sponsor for and fathered his difficulties so readily, hang me if he hasn't dishonoured the bill; but I am safe, I know, in your hands, Brunt."

"Hasn't he sent to you then?" inquired the farmer.

"No, by gore, has he? not a word or screw," replied Sharp. "He knew the Flying Dutchman's capabilities as well, and better than I did; yet he lost, and I won, fairly, honestly, legally won. I say again, he knew the animal's capabilities, virtues, breed, and strength. I, a poor devil, had all the odds against me, yet I won the £500; yes, and intend having it, without delay if possible. I'll teach parsons."

"Not parsons," said the farmer. "Say a parson."

"Whatever you like, Brunt," replied Sharp. "But I was going to say I would teach the cloth honesty, Brunt."

"Bah!" said the farmer, turning to the fire, and at the same time quietly ejaculating, "What a thundering hypocrite!"

"Brunt," commenced Sharp again, "I told you a secret once about that gentleman, at the 'Royal Oak;' you know I knew his mother, and his father don't hang out a hundred miles from this spot. I knew it all before he went to college. Yes, Allaway will do for his cognomen very well at present, but I shall hold a rod over him, Brunt, that will make him find five hundred in a jiffy. I'll swear that he won't like the rural herd, as he calls them, to be made familiar with his antecedents. I won't be too fast though, that will upset everything; but I will put it hard on him presently, and you'll see the result."

"Well, don't be too fast," said the farmer. "I'll see you on Saturday; and in the meantime I will call on Mr. Allaway, and I think I can promise you all will be made right."

"Very good, very good, Brunt," replied Sharp, as he mounted his fiery quadruped in order to start. "Let me see, Brunt," he continued "send me five quarters of oats and a load of hay at the last price, early to-morrow. I can rely on you, Brunt," and away went that gentleman, and was out of sight in a few moments. It will be more fully gathered by the reader, from the past conversation, the character of Sharp, and likewise that he had duped Mr. Allaway in a betting transaction. The fact is, Mr. Allaway

had bet on a horse, the owner of which had been a professed friend of his, in consequence of which he had boldly bet, considering that he properly understood the animal,—little thinking at the same time that his supposed friend was likewise a friend of Sharp's,—that in fact they were two—as the farmer, when in anger, designated them—regular blacklegs, blackguards, etc. Sharp, too, had one day, in a dispute with Mr. Allaway and in the presence of the farmer, at the 'Royal Oak,' told the origin of that gentleman; that he had lived in the county town with his mother, where he had also lived himself, etc.; and so in this manner, in some measure, got the poor young man into his power. It was to this that the farmer, when in a passion with Mr. Allaway, alluded, when he said at the grave of poor Sam, "Do you remember that day?" on which occasion, the clergyman discovered that Farmer Brunt remembered more than he wished him to remember. This was a mistake of the farmer's, for which ever after he was ready and willing to make amends.

"That fellow," soliloquized the farmer, as he returned to his room, "is a scamp of the deepest dye; many, many a less villain than he could be found in chains in the dockyards, and on board the hulks; and yet here he is, having his

day, living a lie to the world ; looks honest, great, and grand ; pays everybody apparently ; keeps fine houses, servants, and the like ; but is it any wonder, when in a single bet he makes five hundred ? What honest industry will come up to that ? The scamp lives on the ruin of others. Wretched despicable character ! not only is he base enough to demand the full payment, but would expose and ruin that young man in the eyes of his parish, and that young man not a hundredth part so bad as he,—he has a questionable origin, but what of that ? Can he help it ? No ! and Sharp shall not ruin him if Brunt knows it ; but the rascal has got him more ways than one. Oh, yes, he will intimidate him, I know he will, with this knowledge, to extort money. Gold will gag him a little while, only a little while ; that he shall have,—dishonest gold, but no blessing shall follow it. No, this young headstrong, thoughtless, wrong-directed young man,—thoughtless indeed, that, poor fellow, is his greatest crime,—shall not be sold by this deep, deep, cursed villain. I will go at once to the parsonage.”

“Molly,” called the farmer, “tell Jack to get old Jet saddled.

“Now, Tom, my boy,” said the farmer, “I have just to go a short visit to the parsonage.

Keep your spirits up, and look after the farm while I am away.” So saying mounted old Jet, and was soon on the road to Mr. Allaway’s. This was the first ride he had taken since the death of his sister.

Having arrived at the clergyman’s, the servant introduced him to the same, whom, in a very excited state, he found pacing his room.

“ Sarven, Sir,” said the farmer, taking off his hat; “ my thinks, now, you would be better employed riding across the fields this fine morning than shutting yourself up in this manner.”

“ Yes, farmer,” replied the clergyman; “ I have frequently enjoyed the morning ride; but there are times when even this becomes tasteless and irksome. But the fact is, I have had a few important letters to write, and this, perhaps, is the reason I am not experiencing what you have, I am sure, this morning so much enjoyed. I am sorry, very sorry,” continued the clergyman, “ that you and I, farmer, should ever have had differences, as with all the parish, I respect you especially; and a great misfortune it was that we should ever so have met. But I am an unfortunate being; clouds, dense clouds, are gathering round my path; darker, and yet darker, they come. But, farmer, give me your hand; let past reminiscences be forgotten in oblivion, like the early

dew this morning at the rising of the glorious sun.”

“Sir,” said the farmer, “I owe you no illwill ; it was the irritability of an old man. But, Sir, I have had much in my time to humble my proud spirit ; depend upon it, Sir, I shall forget the past.”

“But tell me,” said the clergyman, “to what unforeseen circumstance or accident I owe this visit, on this splendid morning ?”

“Well, Sir, it is perhaps an unforeseen accident, and yet perhaps it is not. You will not, Sir, considering me presuming or impertinent when I say that you are involved, and with a man between you and whom I stand in some degree responsible ; a man that would ruin you in your own being, and in the eyes of the world.”

“Sharp ; you know, alas ! too well, farmer,” replied the clergyman. “Since that day you kindly lent your name, that man has caused me many, many sleepless nights and anxious days ; he haunts me like a spectre ; he is my horror. I have not forgotten you were present that day, some years ago ; therefore to you, who know much, I will not be close ; but that fellow, Sir, has secrets I can’t deny. But let that pass ; suffice it to say I can’t honour the bill you were kind enough to back ; my expenses have

been great; I have been too prodigal, and now I am in the power of a man who can ruin me entirely. He is my horror, I repeat, in the pulpit and out of it, in waking and sleeping. Oh, what a coward does a man become! I tell you honestly I have not five hundred in the world. What a wretch I am, and feel myself to be! I have offered him three hundred, but no, five he demands now, just now, at once, or he will expose me to the utmost."

"Bravo!" said the farmer, "bravo! and here's two hundred more; and with this I will gag his open, foul mouth. I am going to market on Saturday, and will call on him."

"You are too kind, too kind, farmer," replied Mr. Allaway. "I deeply appreciate your generosity; my gratitude can know no bounds."

"On Saturday, Sir," said the farmer, "I will settle this for you, as from you."

In the evening, Tom and his uncle paid a promised visit to the doctor's. As they entered, the tea awaited the attention of the guests, presided over by the doctor's lady, by whom sat Miss Vine. The doctor and farmer talked of the weather and the crops, rates and taxes, etc., and other subjects interesting to country men; but most of Mr. T. Brunt's conversation was directed to Miss Vine and her aunt, into whose good

graces he was not long ingratiating himself, as his conversation ran particularly on Indian ladies, silks, shawls, and muslins, mingled with a few anecdotes which called forth the merry laughter of his fair audience; the farmer occasionally giving a kind and gratified glance in that direction.

"Yes," said the doctor, as they drew from the tea-table, "your nephew has grown quite a man since I saw him last. It is astonishing how young people spring up after a certain age; really they get nearly out of knowledge. I could not have recognized him as the same individual had I not seen him associated with you."

"Yes," replied the farmer, "the young dog is too fond of the on-and-on system, doctor. I want to bring him to a bit, if I can. I want to see him come to a stand-still. My brother, I think, is a little to blame respecting Tom. Can't agree together long, I fancy; so he goes off to sea. But, doctor, I tell ye what, I am going to leave him my farm; and his father, you know, is rich; no one to leave it all to but Tom; and yet the young rogue talks now of going to Merica, or somewhere else. But I sha'n't let him, if I can manage it. 'Pon my life now, doctor, I wish he would fall over head and ears slap into love with Miss Vine there."

"What, what, what!" said the doctor; "my niece, my niece?"

"Yes, your niece," replied the farmer; "why not?"

"What, what!" said the doctor again; "has he said anything then?"

"Not that I knows on; but he will soon, I reckon. He seems to be coming it pretty strong yonder. Just look now. Bother the fellow, I wish he would pop the question, and she give the right answer, that I do."

"But you astonish me," said the doctor.

"Not half so much as I should like to," replied the farmer. "Why, my nephew Tom will and shall be worth thousands; and I should like him to have Miss Vine for a partner. There, that's flat again."

"Yes, yes," replied the doctor; "but you know, farmer, these things require serious consideration. I, you know, am guardian to my niece. These things must be done wisely."

"Yes, and they shall be so done," returned the farmer. "Wise enough. Only look; I think Tom's coming it wisely now."

"Yes, yes," replied the doctor again; "but perhaps your nephew is a gay, thoughtless young man, not at all fitted for the bonds of matrimony."

"Gay enough," replied the farmer. "Look at him now; gay enough, and the ladies too. He's making head, depend upon it, doctor; he's nearly all right. Well, I'll do all I can for'n, that I will."

"You don't understand, you don't understand me, farmer," said the doctor again. "You know in such cases the usual mode of procedure is to ask the parents or guardians before the gentleman insinuates himself into the good graces and affections of the lady."

"Ay, ay; I understand, doctor," said the farmer. "That's rather putting the cart afore the oss. Let him find out whether he likes the lass, and whether she likes him; then, I'll answer for it, Tom, my nephew, will come up like a man, and ask your consent, doctor."

"But really, farmer, you have the advantage of me," observed the doctor again, "as I have never thought over the subject before."

"Well then, it is quite time you had," replied the farmer.

"Here, another glass of wine," said the doctor.

"Yes," said the farmer, taking the glass; "and here I drink success to everything."

"Let me see, let me see," commenced the doctor again, musing; "you say you shall leave your

nephew Old Farm. A nice place, I believe,—the best land in the parish."

"Hold, there!" said the farmer; "it is good enough, I fancy, but not too good for Tom. He is able to manage anything and everything; the boy's head is screwed on the right way, I can tell ye, doctor."

"And his father is rich, and all must come to your nephew," continued the doctor.

"Just so," replied the farmer.

"I see, I see," said the doctor, smoking his cigar more vehemently; when, taking it from his mouth again, remarked in a very inquisitive manner, "Not engaged, I suppose?"

"Not he; not he," replied the farmer.

During all this speculation, Tom was busily chatting with the ladies, peeling oranges and cracking nuts for the same in the most attentive and gentlemanly manner; in fact, Mr. Thomas Brunt was coming the agreeable in good style; and the great astonishment to him and them was when the farmer drew his silver hunting-watch out of his fob, at the same time hinting that best friends must part, declared it be twenty minutes to eleven; when, after taking a friendly and affectionate leave of the family, returned to Old Farm again.

During the visit to the doctor's, Molly was

busily engaged in the kitchen as usual, occasionally speculating to Betty of the probability of Miss Vine becoming her mistress.

"Now, Bill," she called out, "what are you a'ter there, stirring and poking the fire in that unfeeling manner? I tell ye if Miss Rachael was alive, you wouldn't dare to use the bellows, blowing all the fire up the chimney, as she used to say; but she's gone, and now when master's out, folks don't seem to know their duty noways. It vexes me, it does; they'll know better some day, I s'pose."

"Well now, Betty, I wonder if Master Tom will be able to make a job on't with Miss Vine? I hope he will, 'pon my word I do; I should like to have her for a missus, she talks so kindly like to poor souls; I like to hear her talk to them when they are dying. Laws now, Betty, I think we shall have a wedding, for this blessed morning I sid four magpies together in the Ten Acres, and that's a true sign; and yesterday, when coming through the copse, I saw two pretty ring-doves cooing, cooing away so nice like, and that's another sign; and last night I dreamed of a funeral, and that means a wedding, for dreams must be allis taken in the opposite."

"Tom, my boy," commenced the farmer, as they passed through the lane, "how did you get on with the ladies? Do you like Miss Vine?"

"Well, nunkey, I think I do," answered Tom.

"Well, did you ask her if she liked you?"

"No, nunkey, of course I did not," said Tom; "that requires judgment, and not to be done in a moment."

"Tom, I like you all the better for it," said the farmer.

"Yes, it takes a little time, you know, nunkey. I don't positively know that she prefers me; perhaps she does; but I like her exceedingly."

"That's right, that's right. You must go and see her uncle to-morrow."

"Not to-morrow, nunkey," said Tom. "Must not do things precipitately. We must know each other a little better; then I won't be backward, nunkey, never fear."

"Right, boy; quite right," said the farmer.

It need scarcely be remarked that Tom spent much of his time at the doctor's, and found ample opportunity of making the proper propositions, which were duly and satisfactorily answered.

Tom and his uncle having returned to Old Farm, proceeded, as usual, round the premises before retiring. "Mind and never neglect this duty," said the farmer to Tom, "or you may repent it." Passing into one of the stables, there stood a horse untied, which, had he ventured into another stall, would in all probability have been

kicked to death. Going into the cowhouse, a fat ox had got his forefoot into his manger, which, with the greatest difficulty, they lifted out again. Proceeding to the granary, the key was found left in the door. "Here, all this shows the necessity for the master taking the last round himself," observed the farmer.

When, having finished the inspection, they returned to the house, which proving cold and gloomy, they soon retired to rest; the farmer thinking of the meeting with Sharp the coming day, and Tom thinking of something else. Rising by times, and having been the round of the farm, and partaking of a good farmhouse breakfast, with a good country appetite, the farmer mounted old Jet on his journey to Sharp's, while Tom took charge of the labours and business of the farm.

CHAPTER II.

“And the justice,
With eyes severe, and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances.”

Shakespeare.

On arriving at Sharp's, that gentleman came forth in his usual *nonchalant* manner, to whom the farmer commenced by stating that he had a little business to transact with him for a gentleman living in his parish.

“Right, quite right; exactly so, exactly so, replied Sharp. I have been expecting daily and hourly an important communication from one of the most respectable gentlemen in your parish, Sir. Yet I thought perhaps he would give me the slip. I was not exactly uneasy,—possibly a little fidgety,—as money, you know, farmer, is a very slippery material. The Rev. Mr. Allaway, I presume ?”

"Just so," returned the farmer; "and he has instructed me to settle the amount claimed by you from him."

"Quite right, quite right; sit down, sit down, Brunt; you are a brick," returned Sharp, presenting a chair to the farmer, and at the same time ringing the bell, ordered a bottle of best port.

"Not for me; not for me, thank you, Sharp; too early in the morning, thank you."

"I see, too early, eh?" said Sharp continuing. "So you have the whole amount, have you, farmer?"

"The whole," replied the farmer.

"You are well acquainted with Mr. Allaway, I presume," commenced Sharp again; "as you appear to father his difficulties and sponsor his illegitimates so readily?"

"I know him as a neighbour should, and would do for him as I would wish to be done by," replied the farmer.

"Good again, good; very nice morality, indeed, farmer," replied Sharp, and drawing his chair to the table commenced writing the acknowledgment for the sum claimed; having finished which, and having received the cash, commenced again, turning round his chair, "Farmer, I won't split; a secret is a profitable investment when it has to

do with high but weak spirits in public positions. When well kept, and properly traded, it is so much excellent capital, farmer. I tell you it commands the man, his money, his all ; he must obey your requests, he must meet your demands, he must play when invited, although sure of losing his stakes. The man, I say farmer, is not his own, he is another's ; he is yours." (Sharp laughed.) "Get a secret, farmer ; leave off delving and ploughing in the hard, ungrateful soil, and look into, probe the secrets of profitable men. They tell me, too," he added, "they are going to make a magistrate of him, a J.P., eh ? Going to be more important in your model parish, eh ? Well I like that, nothing pleases me more than to hear of such becoming public. Brunt, old fellow, I say get a secret and trade with it, and you have got the poor devil whom it concerns here," and Sharp pressed his thumb back upon the table.

"True, too true, they are under, under," (the farmer's voice fell into a whisper)—"a cussed villain," he muttered.

Sharp heard him, and at once sprang to his feet, and, stretching himself forwards, held forth his hand in the attitude of defiance, the muscles of his attenuated neck quivered, relaxed, grew flat, and then full, his nostrils dilated and became unusually expanded, his cheeks hollowed, the

bones of which protruded through the skin, his eyes filled to bursting with malevolence, rage, and hatred, appeared ready to leave their sockets, as they flashed mental fire in every direction ; his thin and compressed lips contracted as in the bitterness of death ; the skin grew cadaverous, and the perspiration gushed from every pore, every hair became erect as charged with electricity, the blood rushed madly through the veins, and the whole man, mental and physical, grew at once fierce and ungovernable with strong emotion and rage. “ Listen, man ! listen ! ” said Sharp, staring the farmer full in the face, and speaking in a low growl ; “ I was not always a villain ; I am what the world has made me. They sent me, and that when young, to hell ! —they sent me to Norfolk Island ! You stare, man ! To hell, I repeat it ; the companion of devils, blast them ! They sent me to live with the offscouring of the earth, of the whole world ; creatures hating each other, and swearing eternal vengeance and animosity to the whole race of mankind ; men whose human sympathies had been turned to wormwood, gall, and bitterness, beyond conception. Farmer,” he continued, “ you don’t belie me, I am a villain ! and that of the deepest dye ; a jackal of the community, a lion of the convict-fold, seeking, ever seeking, to devour the prey, my fellow-man ; a

tiger, a lurking tiger, void of all compassion, waiting in ambush ready to pounce upon the unsuspecting and unsophisticated ; a wolf watching and longing to tear the inoffensive, harmless sheep. You call me Sharp ; that cognomen will do, with *alias, alias, alias*, as many other respeccables have. Sharp, however, is significant ; let no flat come within his power. Think you there is any softness, any mercy, any maudlin, snivelling, sentimental pity here ? ” and Sharp struck his breast. “ Mercy ! yes,” he continued, “ as the eagle has over her prey ; will she not rip it up, strip feather from feather ? Why did they not shoot me at the Cape ? I was condemned, I was ready for that ultimatum, but not for Norfolk Island. They had their misgivings, had they ? afraid of shedding innocent blood, were they ? They suspected, when too late, that I was not the ringleader, eh ? but that a greater coward was. Why was I suspected of so foul, so mean an action, from which at that time my soul recoiled as the soft maiden from the deadly cobra, and which false suspicion turned me from a man to a very d’evil ? Enough, they did so wrong me ; and my spirit proud, too proud to deny so foul a charge ; for Cæsar’s wife should have been above suspicion. Was I not as well born as my accusers, my judges ? Did I not pass through the

same college as some of them ? Did taking the monarch's shilling change my nature to that ignoble thing that could strike in the dark ? Oh ! I ask, why did they not shoot me at the Cape ? I was prepared for death, but not to mildew, rot away a hellish life on Norfolk Island, where nobility of nature cannot flourish, but becomes more and more degraded, ignoble, and poisoned every hour,—a thorough Dead Sea of man. But they gave me a ticket-of-leave. I made use of it ; I crossed with others to Van Diemen's Land. With whom did I cross ? housebreakers ? highwaymen ? murderers ? No ! reformed ones, jail pets, the lambs of the convict-fold ; men who by their hypocrisy gained tickets-of-leave. Ha ! ha ! ha ! ye executors of the law, ye wise ones, think ye your education at that hell upon earth, Norfolk Island, ever turned devils into angels, wolves into lambs, a black Ethiopian in crime into a white Circassian in purity ? Trust no man's penitence when he is hungry ; nor his apparent reformation when at Norfolk Island. We robbed on the highway, we intercepted the gold escort, we broke open gold-diggers' dwellings, ay and worse, far worse than that. Why, I again ask, did they not shoot me at the Cape ? I should then have died comparatively innocent ; but now what crimes, horrid black crimes, rack my brain and stare me in the

face ! For a time I escaped, although £300 was set upon my head, dead or alive ; for months I wandered about, evading the dingoes of the law ; but at last a smooth-faced, hypocritical villain, a ticket-of-leave man like myself, who knew me at Norfolk Island, crossed over with others. He knew me, I knew him ; my pistols hung loaded at my waist-belt as he passed ; I stooped down, apparently in the act of drawing on my gold-digger's boots ; I looked at him under my left arm. Does the villain know me ? Yes,—no,—yes ; my hand is on my pistol. No ! not an eye turns, not a hair trembles, not a muscle quivers in recognition ; or death would have sealed his vision for ever ! He passed on ; but the villain took me in ; £300 was too much for his cupidity. The officers of justice closed me in on every side ; he gained his £300, and I Norfolk Island again. My life spared, once more left at that hell upon earth, with air so balmy and soil so fertile,* but where the moral atmosphere is the foulest of the foul, the deadliest upas upon the globe ; again I got away ; a villain equal to myself attempted

* Norfolk Island is 900 miles east of New South Wales, to which government it belongs ; it was long used as the abode of the worst convicts, the discipline here being still more severe than at the other stations ; it is now broken up as a convict-station, and has become the abode of the Pitcairn Islanders, who were removed there in 1855.

the life of our watcher ; I struck the fellow down ; I saved the keeper's life, I who stood at nothing ! I gained again a ticket-of-leave, a very restricted parole, however ; but I extended it ; a day and a night I was on the deep Pacific, taken at last on board a whaler a shipwrecked mariner, reached old England a shipwrecked mariner ; and here I am, Sir, not now a poor shipwrecked mariner, but a captain of a prosperous game, whose name is Sharp. I am not returned to be idle ; action is my element ; rest, reflection, to me death, cruel black death. I must go on ; I dare not, cannot stop. I am a troubled ocean, a rushing, sweeping tornado, a rolling avalanche, an active volcano belching forth mental fire, smoke, sulphur, and dark, overwhelming lava ; which if retarded, suppressed, would burst the mountain from which it issues."

The farmer, during this singular recitation, this incoherent epitome of an ill-spent life,—and considering the narrator, as well he might, more insane than otherwise,—had gradually, inch by inch, drawn some little distance from him, his countenance and attitude at once betraying no small amount of fear and misgiving ; when presently Sharp, springing forward, seized him by the collar of his coat, at the same time saying, "What have I told you, man ? Have I told you

anything? Have I been dreaming?" The farmer trembled beneath his iron grasp. "Have I committed myself? Tell me, you lean slip of humanity; answer me, you attenuated bodkin, you German flute, you. Answer me, I say, answer me!"

"Nothing, thank God, nothing," replied the farmer, shaking in every limb, and ready to drop from the vice-like muscle which held him.

"I thought not; I thought not," replied Sharp; for the oft-caught fox grows weary of the snares. "Farmer," he commenced again, growing more calm, "I am safe with you. You are no babbler; things don't choke you; you can retain; you can retain. But now I feel relieved—better. The word 'villain' roused me—sent me back to joys and happiness of youth, now gone for ever. But you see how well I deserve the epithet you so liberally bestowed upon me just now."

The ocean, after raging and lashing itself into foam, becomes peaceful; the volcano, after an eruption, still, quiescent, slumbering in forgetfulness. So the over-burdened, heavily-laden mind feels likewise, when the mental storm is ended, in some degree relieved and comforted.

"Farmer," commenced Sharp again, having apparently become quite calm and reasonable, "had it not been for that false court-martial and

sentence, such a wretch as I would never have stood before your optics."

"Sharp," answered the farmer, "say no more; confess not to me, thy fellow-sinner; but confess to him who is able to forgive thee, man."

"Away, stand off, bear back; talk not to me your infernal cant; not to me, swearing eternal hatred to every man, and like to have it so." And Sharp directed a horrid, fiendish leer in the direction of the farmer; but at the same time, observing that the farmer appeared more than a little uncomfortable, struck him a familiar slap on the shoulder, but which familiarity caused the farmer to jump as if a gorilla had placed his hand upon him. Sharp laughed again. "Fear me not, farmer," he continued; "you are safe, old fellow; you are useful to me, man. The lion falls not out with the jackal, his provider. Fear me not, man; I am subject to these mental paroxysms of deep feeling beyond control; but when spent, I am better for the eruption."

The mental storm had now entirely subsided; and Sharp, in quite a sane manner, commenced again, "By the bye, farmer, I will pay you for the oats you sent in. They were first-rate. I never saw so much devildom in my nags before. By gore, they were like cast iron! locomotives were nothing to them. I should like some more of the same sample."

"I got no more," replied the farmer.

"Hay, have you any hay?"

"Nor hay for sale," replied the farmer.

"Ah, I see," said Sharp ; "you farmers are getting deuced scrupulous to whom you sell, eh? Never mind, old fellow, never mind ; money, you know, will command all I require,—honour, esteem, renown, pleasure. It is the paragon god of this world, by which men are gagged and conscience suffocated. Men bow down and pay their vows to this dross as they did to the Eastern king's golden image (he knew well what metal to make his deity of) ; the virtuous as well as the criminal acknowledge the potency of its spell, and are votaries at its shrine."

"Stop, stop, hold there!" said the farmer. "I know what it won't purchase."

"Good again ; clever, very clever. What is it?" inquired Sharp.

"Why," said the farmer, "it won't purchase an inch of time when you will most require it, Sharp, mark me," said the farmer. "Sharp, did you ever read the parable of the rich man and Lazarus?"

"Well, farmer," returned the money-lover, "I never read of such worthies myself, but I believe my mother used to read about such gentlefolks to me when a boy. But, farmer, if you have no

objection, we will end this conference ; but mind, my advice to you is, get a profitable secret."

"And mine is," said the farmer, "that you remember 'The love of money is the root of all evil.'"

"Farmer," commenced Sharp again, "that secret I obtained before I went abroad. When a boy, he was smuggled about from school to college ; but since returning home, we accidentally met at a public dinner in London. As you know, he affected ignorance ; it would not do. 'Mr. Allaway, I presume?' I observed with a knowing wink. I then remarked how happy I was to renew his acquaintance. His abashed looks ignored me ; that was just the state I desired to bring him to ; and you know how well everything is working on my side."

The farmer left, and as he rode from the house of this artificial man, this hardened villain, he commenced soliloquizing, as is the custom with countrymen, who, for miles and hours, have frequently not else than hedges to commune with, "Well, that fellow beats all that ever escaped the gallows. I will have no more dealings we'n. Here's 'is gold ; but how I hate the manner in which it was obtained !" and determining to dispose of it as soon as possible, hastened old Jet, and in a few moments was mingling

with his plain, but comparatively honest brothers in the statute market.

Sharp returned to his room, opened his cash-box, in order to deposit the notes and gold, chuckling and gloating as he did so over the manner in which he obtained the same, and congratulating himself on the cleverness adopted in order to carry out his nefarious plans. "When you get a secret, Sharp, keep it," said he, "and trade with it as long as valuable. I read indeed—more fool I—books that warn me from getting money. I don't want to be made more uncomfortable in my business, I know a little too much of that feeling already." Sharp tried to whistle, "Cheer up Sam," etc. "My mother read," he continued, "she was poor ; I never read, I am rich. 'The love of money is the root of all evil,' eh ? yes, and the branches too. But never mind, old boy, get it lawfully, legally, if you can, but get money. Let me see, a magistrate I am thinking should be of legal birth, or how can he uphold morality in the parish, and dub up some of the young fools to the extravagant sum of two-and-sixpence per week for their folly ? A magistrate should not be a gambler, or how can he condemn such ? A magistrate, too, should not be a parson ; the law and Gospel are not twin-sisters, I say. That's my subject in three parts, strings on which I

intend playing a rich tune before long. Let me see, the other bill becomes due in a month or so. I shall be compelled to back out, consequently he must honour it for me.

A few mornings shortly after the meeting with Sharp, the constable called at Old Farm, in order to summon Mr. T. Brunt to attend the coming magistrates' meeting, to show cause why he should not be prosecuted for shooting at a hare, the same having run off the Earl of Hunting's grounds to those of Farmer Brunt.

"We must attend, Tom, I reckon, or it will be the worse for us."

"With all my heart, nunkey," replied Tom. "I can show cause why on such an occasion, never fear; but they don't give us much time to prepare our defensive; but quite time enough, perhaps, the truth not requiring any varnish, and that is all I intend to advance on the present occasion."

"Right, quite right, boy," replied the farmer. "We read somewhere that when brought before rulers and the like, not to think beforehand what we should speak; yet it annoys me, rather knocks me down a little, to be brought before the great ones for such a paltry thing as this."

"Keep up, nunkey; keep up, keep up, my honoured father's brother; don't let your spirits

go down ; we shall live after this, never fear," said Tom.

" I hate the cussed game laws, that I do," observed the farmer. " I wish the game and their protecting laws were in the sea this moment, I do."

Miss Vine, having heard of the unfortunate circumstance, called at Old Farm the same evening, and very kindly offered her own and uncle's influence, so far as they could in a favourable manner assist the accused, promising to call on the Rev. Mr. Clearview, who no doubt would see Mr. Allaway, who was now one of the magistrates, and who would most likely be of some service in the matter.

" I sincerely thank you, my dear Miss Vine," replied Tom. " I cannot, I am sure, be too sensible of your kind solicitations on my behalf ; but it can only be a very slight affair, and therefore I have no particular misgivings as to the result."

" Yes," replied his fair adviser again, " but you must know that they are unreasonably strict in this parish,—all working to please one great, absolute head. I can assure you it will not do to despise any assistance, for you will require more than you can command, or you are a very fortunate young man."

" My dear young lady," replied Tom again, " I thank you for your great kindness ; but I am

not at all despairing. If justice be really justice on that occasion, I prefer honourably taking my chance, come what may."

So saying, the active little lady bidding him adieu, soon joined her uncle awaiting her with the chaise in the lane. Tom of course, as became him, offered to escort her, which offer she politely refused, observing that she should take no harm ; and before his truant hat could be found, she had reached far out of sight and hearing.

" She indeed is a worthy creature," observed Tom, as he returned to the room, " to exhibit so much anxiety respecting a circumstance that I can safely say does not really give me a moment's uneasiness ; she well deserves the praise bestowed upon her in the parish. Happy, thrice happy, the man who secures so excellent a prize. Ah, what is this, I wonder ? What do I see here ? Why, really, in her hurry and confusion, she has left a book ; an album too,—capital ! What an excellent opportunity ! What will it unfold, I wonder ? Yes, here are many little addresses and contributions ; the first from that excellent man, Clearview. I will see if my muse will suggest anything appropriate, after which I will walk over in the evening, and make use of this as a letter of introduction again. Now, Tom ; commence, Tom."

"A lady did not me invite
An album-subject her to write;
No, she didn't—no, she didn't—no, she didn't.
Go on, Tom! go on, Tom!
Invoke the god of song,—
In this nice book, so clear and new,
In which is written all that's true,
Addressed to one, so good and kind,
Words more suited cannot find
To express my thoughts;
Therefore the same endorse,

T. B."

As Mr. T. Brunt left the doctor's and the company of her whom he discovered he felt more interested than in all the world beside; and having given the hand the farewell press, in return for which "I wish," she said, "that the horrid keepers were somewhere else; but fear not, you will get through this disagreeable,"—Tom at that moment wished for just such another disagreeable in order to produce the like agreeable. "This," said he, as he crossed the fields, "beats the sympathy and satisfaction to be found in the wide, wide world, where I have been seeking it. It is true she is not all that perfection I dwelt upon when discussing the merits and demerits of the case with uncle; but who is? No one; such is a fable, a myth. But she is beautiful without conceit or ostentation, interesting without vanity; and her mind, woman's greatest

jewel, so calm, so well balanced, so composed ; I feel myself quite unworthy of such a treasure. Religion I know little of, myself ; but how adapted it appears to the female sex ! Its softening influence gives quite a charm, an angelic bearing to the possessor. Man it ennobles ; but woman it renders lovely. Such an one is truly adapted for a wife, a helpmeet, a mother. Nunkey is quite right ; I must give best to his superior judgment in the matter. Singular enough, I feel myself changing. I could now be content to govern the little farm, with its animal and vegetable productions. I like the little farm better than the wide world. I see I am changing. The society of tobacco-smoke is indeed all smoke to this."

The next morning, Tom and his uncle made their way to the town where the quarter sessions, or magistrates' meeting, was usually held, where, in their regular and proper positions, sat the sturdy and uncompromising sons of the law, most of whom being as stern and severe as the preservers of game could well desire. On the right side of the legal table, his white cravat contrasting becomingly with his sable suit of best superfine, sat Dr. T——, the vicar of one of the neighbouring parishes, who was known by the common people by the cognomen of "I'll commit them,"

this being his usual mode of procedure, as he always said and declared that no summary punishment could be properly commensurate with the alarming and increasing offence of destroying game without a proper qualification for so doing. On his right sat the squire, a tall gaunt-looking man, known to be inexorable touching the death of a hare or pheasant by an unqualified hand or unauthorized person, and a great upholder and admirer of the game laws, which laws, he said, he ever would hold, maintain, sustain, and retain, as the best man-trap ever instituted by an enlightened country for catching thieves, vagabonds, and miscreants ; for such persons are sure one day to make a sortie on the game, and so sure as they do so, the noble keepers and defenders of the pretty creatures will be as sure to take them. "And, if I had my way, I would send every soul and body of them, man, woman, or child, to Botany Bay, that shot, struck, or kicked at any animal, that animal being within the pale and protection of the game laws." He was therefore recognized as "Botany Bay." Next to him sat the Rev. Mr. Somnus, the clergyman of the parish of Stanstil, a short, corpulent gentleman, with deep inspirations and expirations, every one of which produced a feeling of sympathy in the beholder, who expected every

one to be his last. He was usually chosen chairman or president at country meetings, as they said he filled the chair to a T; that was physically, mentally was of little consequence. He was considered easy and good-tempered, and would have been an acquisition to the bench had it not been for his deep respirations before alluded to. He was notorious for bringing out the words, after long anticipation and labour, and in a squeaking voice, "Let them all have a month;" he was therefore known as "Justice Month-ly." Close to him sat Colonel Wildbred, brought up on his own paternal estate, to follow no particular occupation in this life. His regiment (militia) being seldom called out, he never attempted to learn the regular and necessary duties of the same, that being cleverly performed by proxy. His chief delight consisted in walking about his own locality, accompanied by two canine friends, ascertaining the news of the day, the prelude to which was regularly brought to him by his man William, and dispensed in due form as that worthy shaved the face of his employer at the usual early hour. He cared little about the sports of the field, and his appearance as one of the bench was looked upon by defendant as a great acquisition, and happy omen, knowing that he could afford to be lenient in awarding punishment. He was a

fidgety, restless man, soon tiring of long complaints and defences, and when such happened to be the case, was in the habit of taking out his gold snuff-box, and indulging in deep and comprehensive dips, which threatened to empty the same in a moment. In allusion to this, he was called "Boxing John." Next sat the new member of the bench, the Rev. Mr. Allaway, who, on this occasion, felt himself rather disagreeably situated between Farmer Brunt, the keeper, and some one else. Last of all, the hard-worked solicitor, who acted as clerk to the court, and on whom, judging from appearances, the whole weight of the business fell.

After dispatching the preliminary business of committing for trial, and giving a month, etc., with the usual admixture of seriousness and levity, came forward the case of Mr. T. Brunt. His accuser, Lurch, standing in the witness-box, declared that he had seen the young man, Thomas Brunt, shoot at a hare.

"Stop, stop, stop," said the president. "Swear in the witness;" which the clerk commenced doing immediately, in the usual gabbling manner, minus all veneration; ending with the emphatic and solemn words, "So help you God," the witness finishing by superstitiously kissing the Bible, when it was supposed or presumed, that he

had inhaled or imbibed sufficient religion to compel him to speak the truth, and nothing but the truth.

"Now, my man, tell us what you saw," squeaked the president.

Lurch commenced, "Please your worship, as I was goin' round me lord's ground, I thought I sid somebody on the other side of the hedge, in the field belonging to Farmer Brunt; I saw he had a gun and dog, so, thinks I, I'll just creep up to the hedge and get close up to'n without letting him see me, and then I shall know what he's about."

"What hedge?" inquired the gentleman who in rural parlance was known as Botany Bay. "Did it belong to his lordship or farmer Brunt?"

"Please your worship," said Lurch, "it is the hedge that runs atween me lord's field, called 'Lazy Creep,' and Farmer Brunt's."

"The hedge is mine, your worship," observed Farmer Brunt.

"A capital move," said Botany Bay, turning to his fellow-magistrates. "A clever fellow and no mistake, this Lurch, a first-rate detective."

"Go on, keeper," said the gentleman known as "I'll commit them."

"Well then, your worship, as I was saying,

when I got up to the hedge that runs between me lord's grounds and the farmer's, I lay down, may be the matter of half an hour, or thereabouts,—can't say certain to a minute, and I watched the young man. I sid the gemmen hunting about with his dog and gun, trying to start something, when presently, bolt went a hare out of a bush, which the dog hunted into me lord's fields, and at which the gemmen fired."

"Stop, stop," said Boxing John. "When the young man fired, was the hare on Farmer Brunt's or his lordship's grounds?"

"The hare, your worship, was at that moment atween the two."

"Yes, you see that will make a material difference," said his worship, who was getting tired of the evidence.

"What do you mean, my man?" asked Botany Bay; "that the hare was on Farmer's Brunt's ground or his lordships?"

"Atween the two, I said, your worship."

"Yes, I see; proceed, keeper;" but again stopping him, commenced, "You see, my man, you have brought a difficult question to be decided, as the supposed destroyer and the destroyed were on or between different properties; and further, as the victim supposed to be shot was

not really killed, you see there is more than a little difficulty in the case."

"My man," commenced Boxing John, "remember you are on your oath. Can you swear that the young man really fired at the hare, and the hare only? or might he not have fired at something else?"

"He did, your worship; I sid him fire at the hare. I am certain sure he did."

"Now," said Boxing John again, "did you say he shot the hare—he killed the hare?"

"No, your worship; I only said that he looked to see if he had killed'n or not, your worship."

"Can you tell us whether it was behind or before, betwixt or between, the right side or left, the head or the tail, on which the shot took effect? Now, can you tell me and the whole bench whether the shot took effect or not?"

"Shouldn't like to be put to it, your worship; shouldn't like to swear it."

"Then will you inform the bench how you know that the young man shot at the hare and nothing else, or in the air merely?"

"That is quite plain, your honour," replied Lurch; "because I saw the gun pointed and the gemmen fire."

"Now, you say that you can't state that the hare was struck; and it is evident the hare was

not killed, or you would have brought it here as evidence. How do you even know that there was any deadly ingredient in the gun?"

"Oh, oh, oh! too irrelevant, too much cross-examination at this stage," said Botany Bay and several of the bench at once.

"Go on," said Boxing John; "I have done."

"I think in future," remarked the president, "the colonel had better reserve his cross-examination until the evidence is more complete."

"Decidedly so, decidedly so; the colonel is anticipating too much; yes, too much, too much," said several of the bench at once.

"Yes, too much," repeated and screamed the president.

"Do as you please; ask what and when you like," said Boxing John, at the same time taking a profound pinch of snuff.

"Proceed with your evidence, keeper," said the president again.

"As I was a saying," commenced Lurch again, "I sid the gemmen shoot at the hare, I stepped up to'n then and there, and axed him if he had got a stificate. 'Got a what?' he said. 'A stificate,' I said again. He then said he had no such thing, and gave me this here card," producing at the same time the one given him by Tom in the field. "He said too," continued the keeper,

"that he thought I was something of a servant, because I told him I was me lord's keeper; told me to give this bit of card to me lord, and was a little saucy and perkish like."

A laugh in the Court.

The president.—"I will oblige every person who practises irreverent conduct, to leave this worshipful Court immediately."

"Gentlemen," commenced the president, "you have heard all the evidence of any importance to be advanced in the matter; one or two particulars appear, in some measure, to favour the accused; first, with respect to the hare, there is no evidence to prove that the animal was really shot, and secondly, the fact that the young man was on his uncle's property, the hare on his lordship's, although at first on the farmer's. The turning point appears to me to be the absence of the proper certificate, and which omission perhaps would be fully met by a mitigated penalty, or a month's imprisonment in case of the same not being paid, and I think the law would be, in this respect, fully satisfied;" after which exertion, the president sat down, almost exhausted by the very great fatigue of speaking.

Mr. Allaway now spoke for the first time. "Perhaps, gentlemen," said he, "being a new

member of the Court, I had better be neutral on the subject; but if allowed to express an opinion, I certainly think that a small fine for not having the usual certificate would amply meet the ends of justice in every respect."

"If I had my way," said Botany Bay, "I would send all such across the herring-brook, and no mistake; they should visit Botany Bay without fail, and there would be an end of them."

"I would give them all a month," squeaked out the president.

"And I would commit them all," said the promulgator of mercy, in black coat and white necktie.

Colonel Wildbred took out his snuffbox, and giving it a significant tap, filled his nose with the pungent mixture with a prolonged determination.

"Thomas Brunt," commenced the president, "we find you guilty of unlawfully shooting at a hare; you have heard all the evidence brought against you by the keeper; the offence with which you stand charged is one of great magnitude in this part of the country, and must generally be visited with the utmost severity, or in all probability, if allowed to be indulged in, would very soon be followed with those of a far deeper dye. What have you to say?"

"Gentlemen," replied Tom, "I am not going to deny, in the aggregate, what the keeper has issued against me, nor will I trouble to deny some portions of his minutiae, not strictly authentic. In the main, no doubt, the keeper is right, as I actually shot at the hare, and at the same time bore no legal document for so doing. That is all I wish to say at present, gentlemen."

"Farmer Brunt, have you anything to say?" inquired the president again. "Really, you must be more particular in future, and not allow these fast young men to be shooting about the parish, causing serious annoyance, and no end of trouble, endangering the lives of her Majesty's peaceful subjects, and tending to upset the harmony and good feeling that should ever exist in the neighbourhood."

"I see it all, your worship; I see it all," replied the farmer. "But I do hope your worship will bring it down as light as possible on my nephew; for he, poor fellow, has been here, there, and everywhere,—all over the world, I fancy, a little short on't,—and he tells me there be no game laws in them parts; so when he saw the hare, he in a moment, thoughtless like,—for you can't put old heads on young shoulders,—without thinking he was about to break the law of our dear, dear, happy England, let fly at the quadruped, which

to-year are 'nation plentiful, yetting up every-
thing, that I wish, 'pon my life now, gentlemen,
that the nearest to me was a thousand miles off.
But no doubt he shot at the animal, gentlemen,
but I hope you will deal it out in as small figures
as possible, and the Lord have mercy on your
worships!"

"Thomas Brunt," commenced the president
again, "we find you guilty of the offence of
shooting at a hare without having the proper
document of authority for so doing, called a
game certificate, but in consideration of your
apparent inexperience in these matters, we inflict
upon you the mitigated penalty of five pounds,
and in default of payment, you must undergo
one month's imprisonment in the county jail."

"Gentlemen," said Tom, "will you permit
me to say a word or two?"

"It is not usual," said the president.

"Yes, yes; a word or two, gentlemen," ob-
served Colonel Wildbred. "Rules are sometimes
subject to exceptions, so let it be this once. Go
on," said Colonel Wildbred, "say what you wish
to say."

"I find no fault," commenced Tom, "in the
decision of this worshipful Court, for I really
shot at the hare; for in the excitement of the
moment, as observed by my uncle, I forgot I

was in England, subject to English laws. Gentlemen, I say I do not at all find fault with your decision, the penalty I am about to pay is what the law requires, and which you yourselves presume nothing, but are merely the executors of the same, which we as good subjects should obey. The penalty, gentlemen, I am in the position to pay, but it has frequently occurred to me, since standing before you, how different would have been the case of a poorer neighbour! The position indeed at this moment would have been widely different; yet he perhaps less guilty than myself. His mistake perhaps might have been dictated by the cravings and gnawings of hunger; he might have been tempted to the act by beholding the wasting forms of his wife, and children, or he might have been suffering from the depredations of the animals, and so encouraged to destroy, in such case, his common enemies. Now in all probability the fine could not have been paid, consequently nothing would have remained for him but the jail,—that place that from infancy he had been taught to shun, and which through life he had succeeded in avoiding, not performing any act which could consign him to such place. But sentenced a felon, a vagabond, he passes the streets a felon, enters the jail a felon, comes out a felon. Oh, would not

such a one be tempted to say, ‘Oh, England, thou dread despoiler !’ If such incarceration had not destroyed his self-respect and reduced him to a lower, far lower stage in morality, would he not detest his country ? Let me solemnly ask, gentlemen, do you think the game laws adapted to the present state of society in this country ? or are they not the means to very serious ends ?”

“ Stop, stop, stop,” said the president ; “ we didn’t make the laws, nor can we allow you to proceed any further ; this worshipful bench is not sitting here to be interrogated by any person in the position of defendant. It should be sufficient for you to know that you are lightly dealt with on this your first offence, and therefore beg you will say no more, but beware in future.”

“ Gentlemen,” commenced the farmer, “ I hope you will excuse my nephew saying so much ; I didn’t mean him to do it, I didn’t. I am down-right obliged to your worships for letting it fall so lightly upon my nephew, I am.”

“ Yes, yes, yes ; we see, we see,” said the magistrates. “ Take care of the young man in future, farmer, or it can’t possibly be so light.”

The farmer made a low bow, and with hat in hand, left with his nephew.

“ You rogue,” said he, as soon as clear off,

"why did you say so much to them, boy? shouldn't have said so much, boy. I thought, upon my life now, that they would have clapped on another five for the talk ; bothered, how frightened I felt to be sure!"

"I don't intend being in a like position again, nunkey," said Tom ; "but only let me have a certificate, and woe be to hare, pheasant, or partridge that comes to sup off Farmer Brunt's grounds. Nunkey, that keeper is rightly named indeed, for a more low-bred sneak never insulted my optics ; how disgusted I felt to hear him give his evidence ! I felt I could have stopped his degraded tongue at one blow."

CHAPTER III.

"Marriage is a matter of more worth
Than to be dealt in by attorneyship."

Shakespeare: Henry VIth.

BUSINESS progressed as usual at Old Farm ; the farmer attended the fields and cattle ; Tom's attention was devoted to more estates than one ; Molly looked carefully after the dairy, pigs, and house, and other domestic requirements, being determined, as she remarked, to carry all out just like Miss Rachel,—that was, so far as she could remember ; old Shepherd attended the folding of sheep, finding out the abodes of rabbits and rats, and at night performed the office of watcher over the whole property, Molly frequently rewarding him with a sip of new milk from the dairy, and Tom never forgetting to give him the bones at the dinner-hour.

The day of rest arrived. Tom and his uncle

proceeded to hear the Rev. Mr. Clearview, with many others who were crossing the fields on the same errand. It was a pleasing sight to see them journeying onward, each one with a quiet serenity depicted in her or his healthy countenance. For miles the hearers might be seen crossing the uplands, passing through the valleys and dells, and over the plains, bent upon the one great object—the welfare of the immortal.

As Tom and his uncle progressed on their journey, many were the friendly nods and other homely recognitions bestowed upon the farmer by his country friends, which were again as carefully returned by the farmer and his nephew. The service commenced by Mr. Clearview reading the beautiful prayers of the Church in a rich, natural voice, and most impressive manner, carrying with him the whole congregation. Here was no artificial intonation, no indistinct mummery; but plain, intelligent, humble, but acceptable devotion.

As the good man ascended the pulpit, he looked, indeed, and felt as one who knew his awful responsibility; a dying man about to speak to dying men; the clay about to speak for the potter; the created for the Creator. Who can weigh the responsibility? Who can tell it? Only after this will be known how many hirelings, and not

true shepherds usurped authority over the flock. He spoke of repentance, death, eternal life to come ; of the second coming of Christ. "Who," he inquired, "will be ready to meet him ? Who ? or who will be found like the foolish virgins ? Remember," he continued, "when he comes he'll make no mistake ; he will know the saint from the sinner ; the repentant from him who never repented ;" and so he proceeded, inviting all to come and receive salvation ; even the most rebellious also.

The congregation appeared deeply thoughtful and affected ; the farmer was greatly impressed likewise ; Tom, too, was attentive. It was evident that the spirit had been there, refreshing the hearers, as the gentle dew from heaven. The service over, each returned, conversing on the great and important subjects brought before them.

On going towards Old Farm, the farmer asked Tom what he thought of the sermon.

"What do I think ?" said the nephew. "Why, that you have got the right man in the right place there, and no mistake, nunkey."

"And so you like him, boy, do you ?"

"I do," replied the nephew.

"I am glad in my heart you do, boy," said his uncle again ; "and I hope you will continue to

do so, and regard what he says as from the Lord, for I mightily think he placed him there, that I do, now. Tom," said the farmer again, as they passed the side of the hill, "I think your father is come. I can see Jack leading the grey round to the stable, and there is Dido following."

"I see all," said Tom, looking anything but comfortable.

Tom's father, Farmer Brunt's brother, was known far and wide as a shrewd, clear-headed man of business; business, indeed, was his great delight, for which he would sacrifice everything. Endearing relationships, mutual and sacred ties, never stood in his way in this respect; he was indeed, in every sense of the word, a man of the world, of business; for which everything must give place,—christenings, marriages, funerals, all alike; his answer usually was, "Business must be attended to, and that day won't suit me." Being of a cold, calculating disposition, he never cared nor troubled to sympathize with persons of an opposite turn of mind; therefore it was that the father and son never agreed, the first being exacting and firm to his opinion; the other, careless, yielding, and uncertain, with a tint of sentiment inherited from his mother, to whom he was very attached, but whom having lost when

quite a boy, he felt that the only parent who could properly understand and sympathize with him was gone ; and he never once thought of looking to his father to fill the vacancy, whom he had so frequently heard remark, "I hate sentiment."

On the death of his mother, Tom was sent first to school, then to college, after which he was placed under the care of a surgeon, in order to learn all the mysteries of the healing art ; but after remaining a year or two with this gentleman, Tom fell out with his father, and, as before seen, went surgeon on board a whaler bound to the North Seas, after returning from which, set sail for the East Indies.

As Tom entered the house, he made a respectful bow to his father, at the same time remarking, "How do you do, Sir ? I am glad to see you, Sir."

"Yes, Tom," replied his father, "I have driven over to-day, as I understand from my brother that you are nearly under an engagement to be married to a lady in the neighbourhood,—young, handsome, and amiable, and in every respect a most estimable person ; this I hear from my brother ; you, I presume, did not think it worth your while to inform me of so interesting a circumstance yourself. I hope," he continued,

"that you have seriously considered the subject —the responsibilities of the position. Remember, in marriage you bring another to share your fortunes or misfortunes; of course, you are perfectly aware you must give up exploring and going on as you have been doing of late years. As to the marriage, I shall not at all stand in the way of that; indeed, I give you what you did not ask for, viz. my consent, because I consider it is better that you should have it."

"Thank you, Sir," said Tom.

"Bah!" muttered the farmer, turning to the fireplace; "'tis the wrong way, the wrong way with the boy; that high-fly mounting manner will never do—all law and jaw; a very little of that which he thinks Tom hasn't, but really has—'kindness.' Yes, there he goes; I shouldn't be astonished if Tom packs up and goes off the first thing in the morning, now, that I shouldn't."

"And I understand, Sir," continued the father, "that you have been a prominent party in an affair that concerns me a little, as all my commercial friends have been reading it in the local news, coming to me for an explanation, and congratulating me on having a sporting son. I understand that you have been convicted under a penalty of five pounds for shooting at a hare, not possessing the proper qualification for so doing.

I wonder you did not know better ; but the worst part of the whole transaction was, your very unnecessary lecture to the magistrates after the fine was paid. Know you not, Sir, that you are ordered to honour, obey, and pray for those set over you ?”

“ Yes, Sir,” replied Tom ; “ and some of them require praying for, indeed.”

“ You think so, do you ? I dare say you do. Remember, Thomas, you are a very young man, and have much to learn. I think the gentlemen dealt very leniently with you this time ; but I warn you to beware of the second offence. I hope you will be more careful in future ; remember you bear my name, and it is not quite agreeable to my feelings to hear of such matters. With respect to your marriage, I say again, you have my free consent. You will, I doubt not, have bread and cheese ; but observe, Tom, I am not dead yet, and have the power of cutting you off with a shilling.”

After this long address from his father, Tom found his way to the stable in order to caress his dumb favourites, viz. the horse and greyhound, the latter of which expressed the greatest delight on seeing him, manifested by bounding round him in the highest joy, and excitement, and ever and anon jumping up to lick his face.

"Down, Dido, down!" said Tom; "you are too friendly, my poor, dumb friend. I am glad to see you, too; as my poor mother was fond of your mother. Ah, my dumb friend, these are sad reminiscences! but you look as if taken care of, and that is all you require. And poor Bonny, too," observed Tom, as he smoothed the coat of that fine animal, "for some time you have carried my father safely; I thank you for that, my handsome fellow. I hope all are kind and indulgent toward you, for should anything suddenly happen I should be inclined to say—

"Woe worth the chase, woe worth the day,
That costs thy life, my gallant grey."

By this time Tom observing the greyhound becoming ill at ease, and jealous of his attention to Bonny, "I must leave you now, my poor dumb, but faithful friends," said he. "But, Bonny, I will give you a measure of oats, and Dido shall have some new milk for old acquaintance' sake," which their young master proceeded at once to procure.

As soon as Tom left the house, his father commenced, "Well, brother, you have heard what I have been saying to Tom. You know these young blades must be checkmated sometimes; but at the same time, we will make the wedding as agreeable as possible, and I will attend myself

if I can get away on that occasion. I am sorry, brother, I could not attend poor Rachel's funeral. Poor thing ! they tell me she went off very easy at last ; that was a great blessing ; I am sure I consider it so. But I was compelled to be hundreds of miles from our firm, in consequence of a serious failure of a house in the north, in which we were deeply concerned."

" Sit down, sit down, brother," said the farmer, observing Tom's father becoming restless, " and let us talk the matter over a little ;" his eyes at the same time filling with tears, as they always did when speaking of Rachel.

" I can't remain, my fine fellow," replied his brother, having taken a snack and a little other refreshment ; " I must away, as I am under engagement to dine with a party of merchants at four o'clock, consequently I must leave you as soon as possible ;" so having mounted his horse, and, wishing his son and brother good bye, whistled Dido, and dashed off at a rapid speed.

" You see, boy," said the farmer, " the governor knows all that's going on, although not often here ; and has given you his full consent to the marriage."

" Yes, nunkey," replied Tom ; " I know he has in one way, so that a person can scarcely understand what he means."

"Yes, but that is his way, you know, boy."

"Unfortunately, it is," replied Tom; "not so did my mother; and to tell you the truth, nunkey, I feel at this moment that I don't want his or any other person's leave; and I am sure he need not trouble himself to come to the wedding; in fact I feel anything but comfortable respecting the whole affair just now, such influence has one person over another. I like and respect my father pretty well, so far as he is my father; but so different our dispositions, he always has managed to misunderstand me. You know how anxious I have been to acquaint him of my coming wedding, and you heard what he said. But, nunkey," continued Tom, "speaking of my wedding, by the bye, I think the old house will require a little polishing; a little paint and colouring will make it appear more cheerful; and the stone parlour would be all the better for boards. Miss Vine, you know, has not been accustomed to stone flags; and the materials for each are very cheap."

"Well, boy," commenced his uncle, "you know I like the old-fashioned manners and customs; but I think all that can be done without encroaching much on my odd fancies."

"A little paper, too, on the walls. Paper is next to nothing in price, and worth double in appearance and comfort," continued Tom.

"Well, it shall be done, boy," replied his uncle. "Nothing can be too good for her, I am certain of that," at the same time feeling very glad that his nephew had finished with the necessary improvements,—his whole fear being that he would so change the old homestead that he should not recognize the same when he returned from market.

The next day, however, the farmer mounted old Jet, and made his way to carpenter Sawyer's, who undertook to do the business in a cheap and workmanlike manner; and very soon that worthy made his appearance with his staff of artisans, in order to modernize the old habitation, and remove the pig and poultry houses a little further from the parlour window, where they had rested in calm repose, sending forth from festering and decomposing rubbish, noxious effluvia and deadly malaria for a quarter of a century, without in any way disturbing the mind of the farmer as to sanitary improvements being necessary.

As Tom and his uncle one evening were sitting before the parlour fire, Tom as usual smoking his pipe, but observing his uncle looking unusually dull, and the silent tear ever and anon trickling down his weather-beaten cheek, "Nunkey," commenced Tom, "as I watched the curling cloud ascending from my pipe, I fancied my-

self again in India, going through all the scenes of the tiger hunt, in which I with many others were engaged. You must know, nunkey, that the Bengal tiger is a noble and fearless animal, a creature well worthy the daring and boldness exhibited by those who venture to enter his jungle retreat, viz. the courageous, intrepid, and experienced hunters.

"The excitement of all sport, you know, nunkey, consists in proportion to the dangers connected therewith. There, then, you have plenty of that ingredient, and no mistake ; consequently plenty of healthy excitement.

"The natives, however, object to meet their royal enemy in open conflict, but use many underhand devices in order to entangle and entrap him, a favourite plan being to place near his lair in the jungle a dead horse or bullock ; then ascending a platform, erected for the purpose in some tall trees in the adjacent vicinity, overlooking the carcase. Here, with loaded rifle, the Indian patiently awaits the wily quarry. But his patience is sometimes sadly tried in this manner ; for not unfrequently he has to watch for hours, the lesser prey feeding sumptuously off the difficultly obtained carcase, and whom he dares not disturb, as perhaps his royal highness is crouching and calculating, in the adjoining thicket,

the probability or otherwise of a successful attack. With finger on trigger, and breath suppressed, he anxiously and nervously watches, when presently he hears the crackling of the dry underwood, the feathery palm shakes, the reeds are disturbed, the lesser animals who have been snarling and growling over the repast, silently, as if by one consent, shirk off to their covers. A little longer, and yet a little longer; 'he is gone,' says the Indian. No, he is only watching for further proofs of safety, silently watching; but now, with one tremendous bound, and a savage yell of defiance, he springs forth from his hiding-place, seizes the carcase,—the grand disputer of all comers to the banquet. His eyes flash like balls of phosphorus, his muscles swell fuller and fuller, a hollow growl ever and anon escapes from his capacious chest as he defies the lesser quarry to return to the repast. He still clings to the carcase, without eating the smallest portion; his eyes grow more and more phosphorescent; his tail oscillates and sweeps the ground, throwing up dust and leaves; but now is the moment. With quick eye and steady hand the rifle is directed, and suddenly, and before the report is heard, the once free roamer of the jungle is over on his back, his feet grasping, clutching, and fighting the air, the deadly messenger having entered the top of the skull.

"This, nunkey, is the manner the natives secure the Bengal tiger. The English, however, ignore this cowardly manner of proceeding. They follow him to his lair, mounted on elephants, animals so trained that they appear to thoroughly understand what they are about, and seem to anticipate the whole proceedings. Well armed and equipped, our party arrived at the casting-off spot. Presently the order was given to advance. We had not advanced more than three miles into the jungle, when the dogs gave the signal, view halloo ! and in a moment, my locomotive, a large bull-elephant, elevated his trunk and tail, stamped his feet, expanded his ears, and with the most intelligent and speaking eyes, pointed out the direction of the game. We carefully advanced, when presently, cat-like, with belly to the ground, cautiously passing between the reeds and tall Indian grass, presently the sagacious animals caught sight and scent of him, and on they pushed, through thicket and brier, with the greatest rapidity.

"The dogs were now slipped to bring him to bay. He appeared to despise their attempts, and looked on them for a moment with disdain, as they approached him yelling and barking. Near and nearer they dared, when, with one stroke of his paw, he scalped one of the devoted but too

presuming quadrupeds. He then broke cover ; the remaining dogs following him. His blood was up, and feels too proud to run away ; he stands again. The elephants surround him ; the crack of a rifle is heard ; the enraged beast fixes on the neck of my elephant ; the animal makes some dreadful plunges to disengage himself, but without avail ; but a bullet from my rifle enters his heart ; he falls over. The elephant immediately placed his foot upon him, and in revenge pinioned him to the ground with his tusks. He was a fine specimen of his tribe, and as fat as one of your oxen, nunkey. We preserved the skin, which proved to be a very valuable one. This fellow was a well-known enemy, known by the name of 'Blueskin,' and had been in the habit of lurking about Indian villages, and pouncing, when a chance occurred, on the little black children, as the cat on a mouse in your rickyard."

"That will do, boy ; that will do ; say no more about such vermin. I am precious glad they didn't lay hold of you, boy, that I am now ; bother to them," said his uncle.

"You wouldn't like India then, nunkey," continued Tom ; "for there you find serpents in the roof of your bungalow, and other parts of your dwelling. In some parts of India serpents

abound everywhere ; they are in the water, and out of the water ; they are in the jungle, on the farm, in the garden, in the roads, on the banks, in the beds, in the boots,—it is a fact, I assure you, nunkey ; they are found everywhere, especially the deadly cobra.”

“ Stop, stop, stop, there’s a good fellow,” said his uncle ; “ tell me no more of such vermin. I am very glad I am not there, that I am.”

In this manner, Tom constantly endeavoured to arouse and divert his uncle’s attention from gloomy thoughts, for he still thought of Rachel, as he observed her empty seat, her solitary work-basket, with knitting needles and worsted balls, as they rested when the busy hand was called away ; the farmer having prohibited any one removing the same, notwithstanding they brought painful reminiscences to his memory. He liked to look at them, he said, as they kept him in a right frame of mind, and from forgetting that—

“ He builds too low
Who builds beneath the skies.”

“ I am glad you are here, my nephew,” said the farmer ; “ for my circle has been rudely broken,—no,” he added, “ kindly broken, to teach me this is not my rest ; to prevent me being swallowed up in this, the road merely to another and better state of existence.”

Molly, as before observed, did all her truant memory and capacity permitted her to render things comfortable ; but it could be plainly seen that a more intelligent hand was required at Old Farm, as at times everything would be properly attended to, then again entirely neglected ; so that the farmer constantly complained of taking cold, but ended by saying, "I am getting old maybe, and can't stand the changes as I used to do."

As Tom and his uncle were engaged one morning as usual having breakfast, in regular bacheloric style,—the farmer cutting bread-and-butter, and Tom pouring out the tea, which by the bye he was generally in the habit of presenting to his uncle minus sugar,—“Tom,” said the farmer, “I don’t know how it is, but my thinks something is about to happen. I feel like depressed, and uncomfortable.”

“ Think nothing of the sort, nunkey,” replied Tom ; “ leave all such ideas to old maids, and such like, never give way to anticipate trouble.”

“ But somehow it is forced upon me this time, boy,” said his uncle. However very soon the conversation turned upon cattle and farming. Breakfast having ended, however, the house was presently alarmed by a loud rapping at the door, when a messenger could be heard inquiring

of Molly, and in a hurried manner, if Master Brunt was at home? and who, when the farmer advanced towards the door, discovered was no other personage than the boy Jones, Mr. Allaway's servant; who was fetching and losing breath in a most ridiculous manner, and which prevented him introducing his subject for some minutes. There stood the messenger (the farmer anxiously looking on,) much like the covetous school-boy after drinking a copious draught at the street pump. "Farmer, Farmer, Master, Master Brunt!" he presently ejaculated, then fetching breath, his mouth ever and anon wide open, until the farmer's patience becoming quite exhausted, "What's the fool a'ter, going on like that?" said he. "Why do'snt go on with what thou hast to tell us, and not stand gaping there as if thou hast swallowed the dish-cloth?"

This natural piece of humanity, as before stated, was Mr. Allaway's servant-boy, Jones. There he stood, with hands and face otherwise than clean, through which his rosy cheeks pierced, much like the sun in a London fog. Now Jones had filled the important positions at the parsonage of garden-boy, and errand-boy, as well as knife and shoe-boy, and when required, the office of tiger likewise, that very necessary addition to a gentleman's cab; on which occasion he appeared in

a high-crowned hat, top-boots, small-clothes, and waist-belt,—the envy of all the village lads ; who did not neglect to inform him that he much resembled the animal whose name he usurped for the time, holding on by his paws, and dared him to stand without seizing the straps. So one day, on approaching the village, Jones determined on trying the experiment, as his master drove through a ring of boys playing at marbles ; but just when Jones was about producing the desired conviction, his master suddenly struck the horse with the whip, the sudden jerk of which brought Jones to the ground, to the infinite amusement of the ring of young gamblers, who burst out into a fit of laughter which made Jones spring to his feet, then to the cab, as if nothing had happened.

“ Farmer Brunt ! Farmer Brunt !” continued Jones again, “ as I was going round our garden a half an hour ago or thereabouts, to drive away the birds from the currants and gooseberries, I heard Sally, the cook, sing out to me, ‘ Jones, Jones ; come here, Jones ; quick, quick ! ’ So off I scampered towards her, when she rose up both her hands and both her eyes, and said ‘ Oh, our poor, poor master ! Go and tell Farmer Brunt, run ; make haste ; be quick, be quick ! ’ It was the cook, Farmer Brunt, master hired last mop ; the cook that left was very kind to me, Farmer Brunt.”

"Yes, yes ; go on, go on, you silly," demanded the farmer, getting very impatient ; "tell us what thou wast going to say."

"Well," continued Jones, taking off his hat and wiping his forehead, "as I was gwin to tell ye, Farmer Brunt, when she called out I ran up the garden as fast as I could, when I saw her standing at the door,—she had on a clean white apron on, which she always wore when cooking,—so I suppose she was preparing the breakfast. Ah, she's a nice cook, she is, Farmer Brunt ; her apple dumplings are worth eating, I can tell ye!"

"Yes, yes ; go on, you fool ; what is it ? Go on, you imp of Satan."

"Yes, Master Brunt," returned Jones, "I will ontwist it, as fast as I can, Well, said Sally, 'Oh, Jones ! Oh, Jones ! Our master has cut ; and there will be an awful state of things. We shall all want places and characters ; and mine is only three months long ! And all the beautiful furniture will be sold ;—everything will be upset ; and there will be devil to pay.'"

"Cut, cut?" said the farmer. "Where did he cut to ? who did he cut ? what did he cut ?"

"Why, his throat !" coolly replied Jones.

"His throat ! You child of the devil," said the farmer ; "why do you kill the time in this way ?"

"Never mind, farmer," replied Jones. "You needn't be in a hurry now, it has been all over a time ago."

"And how much did he cut, you silly?" said the farmer again.

"How much? clean from ear to ear, his head nearly off, I fancy,—clean through the jug'lar, they say."

"Horrid! horrid!" said the farmer. "His blood be upon thee, Sharp!"

No sooner had Jones finished, than Snipp arrived with the same melancholy intelligence; on hearing which the farmer ordered old Jet. "What a world of sorrow this is!" he repeated as he jogged off on old Jet, who would not stir out of her twenty years pace' of five miles an hour for any persuasion or force that could be brought to bear upon her.

"It is that fellow Sharp!" said the farmer, as he passed through the lanes.

CHAPTER IV.

“ All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women players.”

Shakespeare.

“ YES,” said the farmer, as he jogged through the lanes, “ he has hunted his victim to the very death,—the blood-sucker, vampire, as he is. I am tarnation sorry for the misguided young man ; but what more could I do ? I certainly would have done more had I only known how, rather than this horrible affair should have occurred in the parish. I feel for him from my heart ; and only wish I had been made the instrument of saving him from this rash deed, this self-murder. Oh, how dreadful must be that man’s feelings when he prefers death rather than life, to give up the seen for the unseen ! Young men, young men, take care of the company you fall into !”

At length, however, the farmer arrived in view

of the parsonage, a neat villa residence of modern construction, surrounded and belted in with a pretty laurel shrubbery, out of which sprang here and there Scotch and spruce firs, with other handsome forest-trees ; the stable, cowhouse, and poultry-yard lay at the back of the premises, to the first of which, as soon as her master had dismounted, old Jet hastened her steps, in order to secure the hay she usually found left in the rack of one of the stalls. As the farmer again gazed on the house he observed that the servants had not been unmindful to give the habitation the proper mourning aspect of curtains down and shutters closed, which at once convinced him again that the Rev. Mr. Allaway was no longer the owner of that pretty and quiet domain.

The Rev. Mr. Allaway, having lived the life of a bachelor, had been in the habit of keeping up a small establishment of three or four regular servants, with, as the season required it, one or two day-labourers in addition ; one old John Smith acted in the capacity of overseer, and his wife housekeeper,—they were in fact the confidential servants of the vicar.

It appeared from the statements of the old couple, that after the post arrived that morning old John entered his master's study in order to carry out some domestic duties, and without

having been observed by him, who was too much engaged reading a letter for this, but which presently he threw from him on the table, saying, at the same time, " Ah, Sharp, old fellow ! true, too true,—you make me pay you for keeping a secret. Fool! fool! that I have been to have imagined such an avaricious wretch could ever be paid ! ha, ha !" On turning quickly round he observed the old servant ; to whom he spoke in a hurried, quick manner, " As what ! what, man ! what do you do here ? from whence do you come ? Begone, man ! begone !"

When the old servant became quite alarmed at the conduct of his master, who usually spoke in a kind and condescending tone.

" Come here, man ; come here, man," he commanded again. " I want to speak to you. I want to send you to the town ; haste, haste ! Begone, begone !"

" Where to ? where to ?" inquired the old servant.

" Haven't I told you ?"

" No, Sir," answered the servant, in a great fright.

" Ah, I see," said his master. " Now, Sir ; get out the old hack in a moment ; haste, begone ! Know you not, man, that I am out of scent ? Go at once to the town for a bottle of Eau de Cologne ;

and if possible let me get rid of this disgusting effluvium constantly arising from all around. Now there," pointing to the door, "haste, be quick!"

And away went the old servant, but in the hall he whispered to Betty that he was terribly afeared there was something very, very serious the matter with the master, and described to her all he had seen and heard; but could not stop to tell her more, his master being in such an awful hurry for the scent.

Very soon, however, after old John rode off, the old woman crept to the door and peeped through the key-hole, holding at the same time the key of her own room in her hand, in order to fly to the same as a city of refuge in case of need. She observed her master pacing the room, in a very excited manner, still reading the letter; on the table she could distinctly see the brandy bottle she had replenished the night before, and all but empty. No sooner had she regained the precincts of her room than she heard her master go upstairs, open and shut drawers and boxes, and after a little time all was quiet; and so quiet that the poor old woman very anxiously awaited the return of her husband; who, when he arrived, at once made up to the bedroom and rapped at the door in order to deliver the Eau de Cologne. But no answer. Again he knocked, but still no answer; all was

still, still as death ; the old man said he felt hot, and then cold, and then dizzy, and at once called up the other servants in order to burst the door, when, horrid to relate, on the floor, in a pond of blood, lay all that remained of his once noble and handsome master, with his throat so cut that death must have been instantaneous ; on the table lay a letter from Sharp, which read as follows :—

“ Rev. Sir,—The last time I wrote, you thought
“ proper to refuse the small sum I so modestly
“ requested ; but now, as I feel it impossible to
“ meet the anticipated demand, you will be com-
“ pelled to honour the bill for me, as I have
“ not the wherewithal for the purpose ; perhaps
“ in the retirement and seclusion of a country
“ vicarage you forget the power that rests in a
“ secret ! No doubt it would be better for all
“ for the same to slumber on and be properly
“ nursed, as I have nursed it for many years ; but
“ it is quite possible to bring the same into ac-
“ tion. I need not remind you that a clergyman
“ and a magistrate should be of good — ; but
“ send the needful, and you are safe, so far as
“ am concerned.

“ Yours, etc. etc.,
“ SHARP.”

At the bottom was written in pencil, in the
vicar's own handwriting,—

"No, no more! never again! my debts will
“soon be paid.

“ALLAWAY.”

“This,” said the farmer, as he read the note, “has done the mischief. Now, my thinks if I had only known it yesterday, I might have settled it with that fellow. Foolish man! to have allowed this to have led him on to the rash act of destroying both body and soul,—but it is the proud spirit. Keep that, John,” said the farmer, “it will be of consequence at the inquest; it will explain the state of mind that led to the sad act.”

The farmer remounted old Jet, feeling sick and ill from the sight he had been called upon to witness, and as he rode back through the lanes and fields pondered over the sad circumstances that led to the tragic end. “Yes,” he burst forth, “this comes of the first wrong step, of which he, poor fellow, was truly innocent. But Sharp is cheated of his victim now,—he has over-acted his part.”

As might have been expected, unusual excitement reigned at the farm; the servants were in a state of the greatest consternation. Mr. Tom, too, who had seen many of the ups and downs of life, and had lived a long life in the space of a few years, felt no little astonishment at the event; he had never heard anything from his uncle respect-

ing any of the deceased gentleman's antecedents, and all the answer he could return to the many anxious questions of the servants was, "I don't know any more than you."

"Laws, Sir," said Molly, when her master entered the house, "what could have made him do that, I wonder! With a beautiful house, servants, carriages and all. Poor soul, I wonder what made him want to get away, I wonder, like that,—no children, nothing to vex or plague him,—one would have thought he would have wanted to live allis, almost! Only think now, dying right out, and doing it oneself! It is bad enough mythinks to be killed by another, or to die when our time comes. I wonder all them books he used to read to poor souls did not teach him better, or what's the use of reading?"

"Yes," said Sam's surviving companion, "I didn't feel at all inclined for it like when I expected to go, as poor Sam went, that I don't think I shall be a'ter trying it on myself."

"No," returned Molly, "thou didst struggle precious hard on that occasion, and I am glad thou didst. It is quite true then, master, is it?" inquired Molly again.

"Quite true; too true, Molly. Poor fellow! Fetch me a glass of wine, Molly; I feel anything but improved by that shocking sight."

The inquest was held without delay. The farmer excused himself from making one of the jury, as he felt unable to look upon the deceased again ; the inquest, however, closed as might have been expected.

Sharp still continued to practise the game of living by his wits ; he introduced himself into the society of the young and unsophisticated, soon obtaining a superior advantage over them ; his plans generally proving successful, and almost certain to entrap the separated quarry, as the cunning deerstalker the separated buck. His apparent urbanity of manners, fashionable exterior, added to his gay and dissipated home, were killing decoy ducks, and many who crossed over his deceptive threshold lived to curse the moment they had been so misled. The words of Farmer Brunt were true when he said, “Many a better man than Sharp could be found in her Majesty’s dockyards.”

The funeral of Mr. Allaway over, the creditors soon issued a bill of sale, one of which found its way to Farmer Brunt’s ; the list consisted of carriages, horses, dogs, etc.—in fact, all the chattels of a real country gentleman. Tom took the bill, read the same up and down, and commenced ticking off a few particular articles. Should the reader be at all anxious to know the particular objects he

marked off I will just inform him that a mark stood opposite a pony and chaise, the pony suitable for a lady, to ride or drive ; another stood against a cottage piano, another opposite a lady's writing-case, and a fourth against a couch.

"What are you about, boy?" inquired the farmer, seeing his nephew engaged with the bill of sale.

"I was just marking off a thing or two as they occurred to me, nunkey," said Tom, "that in all probability I may be tempted to bid for when the day of sale arrives."

"Ah, you rogue! Let me see; bless the boy, it is nearly all ont's for the ladies, eh?"

"Quite right, nunkey," replied Tom; "it struck me I might secure a bargain or two by attending the sale."

"So you may, boy," returned his uncle; "and you shall go and try when the day comes, and purchase whatever you like; and so the world goes on," said the farmer, "one dies and another is ready to purchase his sticks. This is a changing, ever-changing world,—imperfect; imperfect," he repeated.

The sale day having arrived, Tom attended the auction, when a stout, red-faced, well-satisfied young man, bedizened with rings, a well-polished head, and a large superfluity of frilled shirt,

mounted the rostrum, commencing, “ Gentlemen and ladies,—ladies and gentlemen, I should have said, beg your pardon, ladies,—what could I have been thinking of, I wonder ?” giving at the same time a profound salaam in the direction of the fair ones, as compensation for his breach of etiquette. “ Now, ladies and gentlemen,” he commenced again, “ the first article I have the honour to offer for public competition is a fine, large, mahogany Pembroke dining-table, not the least the worse for wear ; indeed, perhaps I may add, with the greatest veracity an auctioneer is subject to indulge in, that it is even better than new, as few such are made in the present day ; it only requires a glance from a well-trained eye to see the value of this lot at once. Who says, then ? Ten, fifteen, —twenty shillings only offered. (A voice : ‘ Twenty-five.’) Thank you, Sir,” returned the auctioneer ; “ going at twenty-five without an immediate advance ; going, going,” the hammer elevated. (A voice : ‘ Twenty-eight.’) “ Thank you, go on again. Going at twenty-eight, going without an immediate advance ; going, going,—the third and last time,—gone,” and down came the unalterable hammer of decision. “ Who’s the purchaser ?” inquired the knight of the hammer ; when, having been satisfied, entered the same in his note-book. And on the sale proceeded ; the gentleman of the

rostrum ever and anon interlarding his speeches with many witticisms which tended to enhance the value of the articles under consideration, when presently he came to the pianoforte. "With this superior instrument," commenced the auctioneer again, "is connected several interesting historical facts, well worthy the consideration of the purchaser. It originally belonged to the Earl of Dowson, and presented by him to the ever-to-be-lamented Lady Elvingham, on her first trip as wife of the ambassador to the court of Persia, consequently the instrument has taken a journey of many thousand miles, and returned to this country, after meeting the vicissitudes of climate, as musical as ever, and not a bit the worse; proving at once the strength of its internal and external constitution. You are all acquainted, ladies and gentlemen, with the lamentable catastrophe that befell the fair owner, and which produced such a gloom over her friends and countrymen. Subsequently the instrument fell into the hands of Colonel Worl, when he having become bankrupt, was sold again and purchased by our ever-to-be-respected and lamented vicar, whose chattels it is my sorrowful duty to dispose of this day (and here the auctioneer drew a becoming face, and modulated his voice). That is the history of the instrument, ladies and gentlemen," he continued,

"as nearly as I can remember, and there is little doubt, that with all this romance and tragedy attending the same, the music to be drawn from the chords will be of the most magic and enchanting kind. Think, ladies, think, gentlemen, of the beautiful, aristocratic fingers that have condescended to press these ivory keys, and I am sure we shall find many bidders,—the first I am confident will be a good one. But now, with your permission, ladies and gentlemen, talking being a very hard and distressing exercise I will drink your healths, individually and collectively ;" so saying he took up the tumbler of cold brandy-and-water and speedily reduced its contents. Commencing again ; "Now, who will give me a starting bid ? (A voice : ' Five pounds.') Thank you, Sir," returned the auctioneer ; "please to proceed ; go on, carry it on, ladies and gentlemen. Six pounds now offered, seven pounds, eight pounds ; go on, ladies ; go on, gentlemen,—only eight pounds now offered for this superb and in every way interesting and valuable instrument ! Why, really, ladies and gentlemen, it is hardly the price of a street hurdy-gurdy ! Nine pounds offered, ten pounds, eleven pounds offered for this interesting instrument, with its extraordinary antecedents and rosewood case. Going at eleven pounds,—the wood alone is worth all the money,—going at eleven pounds ;

only eleven pounds offered for this elegant, historical, tragical, romantic instrument in rose-wood case ! Going, I say, at eleven pounds without an immediate advance, going at eleven, going, third and last time,—going,” and down came the hammer of decision. On inquiring who was the purchaser, the answer was, Mr. Thomas Brunt.

“The next lot, ladies and gentlemen,” continued the loquacious auctioneer, “consists of a pony, chaise, and harness, and, as the catalogue states, the pony perfectly quiet to ride or drive, and above all, and as a further recommendation, has been driven by a lady,—a very great recommendation indeed, gentlemen, as we all know how softly and cleverly the fair sex can accomplish this bit of manual. Oh, gentlemen, only let them have the reins ! and they will drive you, I need scarcely say how, and where. Well, barring all nonsense, ladies and gentlemen, I need scarcely remark that it is a nice, strong little animal, and really has been driven by the late Rev. Mr. Allaway’s sister, she in fact constantly drove the little fellow when she paid her accustomed visit to the vicarage. Now, gentlemen,” continued the auctioneer, “what a beautiful present this lot would make for a kind and loving husband to present to a pretty, handsome, interesting, duti-

ful young wife ! The pony, perfectly sound, so I have been informed, and free from every vice that horse is heir to, and at the same time, possessing all the equine virtues, and might be driven by an infant, and without any exaggeration by a piece of thread merely. The phaeton is in a good state of repair, with patent axle-trees, and would last a dozen years or more with proper care ; and the harness almost new, so that in fact the lot has everything to recommend it.”

“ What’s the breed ? What’s the breed of the pony ? ” inquired two or three voices at once.

“ Well, gentlemen, with respect to the breed,” replied the auctioneer, “ I can hardly undertake to determine, but the late and ever-to-be-lamented Mr. Allaway, whose chattels it is my melancholy duty to dispose of this day,—the late Mr. Allaway, I say, being fond of curiosities, purchased the little fellow as a reminiscence of the late sad war. The little animal, previous to the war, had been used by a cousin of our late lamented vicar in a shooting excursion in Estremadura, in Spain,—in fact I believe the pony is of Spanish origin ; he then sold him to an officer going to the war, to use in the capacity of pack-horse ; the little fellow followed his master through the whole campaign, carrying on his back the necessaries for his existence ; and when that officer became too ill to

walk, yet desiring to show pluck before his men, he bore him on his back, night after night, to the trenches, until that gentleman was unfortunately shot by the enemy. His brother-officers then subscribed and sent him home to a brother in England ; he, however, died and the pony was again sold, and Mr. Allaway became the owner. That, gentlemen, I believe, is the biography of the pony ; the breed you must determine for yourselves ; you can all see, gentlemen, that he is a most useful animal, with a first-rate character ; has seen much of the world ; served his Queen and country ; but, and above all, has been driven, I say, by a lady. But really, ladies and gentlemen, talking is a very dry and distressing exercise, and with your leave, I again wish and desire you may have much satisfaction with your new purchases," and the auctioneer emptied the glass of its contents, when he resumed, " Now, ladies and gentlemen, what do you say for the pony, chaise, and harness ? It will serve to drive the dear little ones for an airing, and thereby be the means of saving there is no knowing what amount in doctor's stuff and misery. For you know, gentlemen, philosophers tell us that the organs of digestion are the seat of life ; keep these organs well, and all will go on harmoniously in this harp of a thousand strings ; for this purpose physicians give us

the bitter cup for a tonic ; but we learn that the best tonic is the oxygen of the air inhaled, especially when riding in an open conveyance. Now, then, ladies and gentlemen, this little combination might really be termed, without any hyperbole, ‘the family physician,’ or, as I have before remarked, the same will do admirably for a gentleman, married, or about to marry, to present to a beloved wife :” here the auctioneer cast an eye in the direction of Mr. Thomas Brunt. “There is really no knowing,” he continued, “what might result from such a little kindness as this, inasmuch as it would tend to stifle and keep down the irritability of temper that might, from nervousness or otherwise, arise by inhaling, without fatigue, the balmy, fragrant, bracing country air. I have very little doubt, and no hesitation, in saying that, were such a circumstanced couple in Essex, they would be sure to gain the Dunmow Flitch,—indeed I am certain of it ; and by simply keeping such a little, inexpensive convenience as this. Ladies and gentlemen,” continued the loquacious gentleman of the hammer of decision, “time would fail me to enter more fully into the merits and advantages of this lot ; now, will you give me a fair start ?” he inquired, at the same time giving a nod in the direction of Mr. T. Brunt, who at once set it up at five

pounds. "Five pounds," repeated the auctioneer; "thank you, sir; five pounds only offered for the pony, chaise, and harness! Why, the phaeton alone cost twenty pounds, at least. Six, seven, eight, nine pounds,—thank you, gentlemen; carry it on, gentlemen; ten pounds offered; go on, ladies and gentlemen. Ladies, come think of the little dear ones at home,—blooming cheeks, muscular frames, good digestions, pure blood,—all might depend upon this little possession." The bidding went on again,—eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen pounds. "Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, thank you; really I must remark that we are somewhat backward in coming forward, only fourteen pounds offered for that worth twenty-five at least."

A Voice.—"Can't see how you make it up."

"Can't you? I will tell you," replied the auctioneer. "Pony, ten; phaeton, twelve; and harness, three; and there you have it."

"A mighty good un at addition," said a farmer; "but can't come subtraction, I guess; but it won't wash, Mr. Auctioneer."

"Well, ladies and gentlemen," continued the auctioneer; "as we were saying, only fourteen pounds has been offered for this compact, and in every way excellent combination. Going, then, at fourteen pounds."

A Voice.—“Fourteen ten.”

“Now really, gentlemen, I would much rather not take shillings. Fifteen pounds, thank you, that will do, Sir; going at fifteen, without an immediate advance; going at fifteen, going,—the third and last time,” and the hammer of decision descended to seal the bargain. “Who’s the purchaser?”

“Mr. Thomas Brunt,” was the answer.

And so, on went the sale, until the whole effects of the late Mr. Allaway were scattered broadcast far and near over that, and many of the adjoining parishes; in addition to which, not a few of the articles found their way into the brokers’ shops in the neighbouring towns, and there, in the midst of dust and filth, stood out in bold relief for weeks after, until the *pro tem.* owners could obtain the price which they had promised themselves, and considered dirt cheap at fifty per cent. profit, taking in consideration the interesting tragedy connected therewith.

Mr. T. Brunt returned to Old Farm, and the next day sent one of the men to fetch home the purchases, which having arrived, the farmer commenced inspecting in a critical manner.

“The pony looks all right,” said he, as he walked round the little docile animal; “pretty and compact, sound wind and limb, not given to

prayers, I suppose," at the same time separating the hair covering the knees. "Eyes tolerably perfect; wind, wind, how is that I wonder? I like a good bellows," giving the animal the ascertaining press; the farmer shook his head. "Yes," said he, "a little touched there, but useful for quiet work many years to come, perhaps."

This little disposition to asthma Tom attributed to the change of climate to which the little animal had been subjected in his military career.

Altogether, however, the bargains pleased the farmer, as he frequently remarked, "The boy's head is screwed on the right way, I know it is." The farmer ordered the pony into the best green meadow the farm acknowledged, and there, in the midst of green herbage and sweeter wild-flowers, he enjoyed weeks of unmolested happiness and freedom in the invigorating fresh air, to which he kindly responded by becoming daily more sleek in coat and rounder in form. As to the piano, Tom's uncle remarked, "I don't know much about musical machines; but there are plenty of them about nowadays, too many by thousands in farmhouses, but suppose we must find a nook for'n at Old Farm, it will be all right, perhaps. I dare say my nephew will keep it under proper control; it won't be an everlasting strumming, maybe, as mythinks a little on't goes a long way.

Here, Molly!" called the farmer; "see that it is placed in the parlour; it will look much like, and serve the purpose of a sideboard, and when any one wants to grind away an hour in this manner, you can trot'n round for the time."

"Laws, master," commenced Molly, "I thought you didn't like pianers; and yet to be sure, bless me, how folks alter!"

"Who said I did like them, you silly? Get you gone," said the farmer.

"Why, if there ain't a real pianer master has stuck up in the parlour. I should like to hear Master Tom or some one else play; I fancy I could stand a whole hour and not get tired."

"Yes, yes, you simpleton. I didn't buy the music-box, did I? You listen? I don't doubt that in the least, and where is the work going all the time? Tell me that; like master like man, eh, Molly? We shall have plenty of hearers no doubt, and the work all neglected. I know Farmer Strong will rail me on it finely, for he knows I never did like these here things in a farmhouse. Well, he is quiet now, and there let'n be; so long as the tongue is still, no one will know the child is in the corner."

"Nunkey," commenced Tom, having returned from seeing the pony, duly inaugurated in Cow-slip Mead, "perhaps you feel some little anxiety

at the introduction of that instrument into Old Farm, the walls of which have been as yet strangers to the enchantment produced by the practice of melody and harmony. Well, I grant it was not in this way you obtained your possessions; but still I think nunkey will agree with me that when work is done, and nothing more can be made by speculation or labour, it will be most agreeable to pass an idle hour in this innocent and refined recreation."

"Right, boy, right; innocent enough, I hope," returned his uncle.

"You know, nunkey," continued Tom, "the lady to whom I am engaged has been accustomed during her life to the instrument, and it is possible she might feel lonely should we bring her to Old Farm, away from all her usual simple and refined amusements; she will doubtless like an instrument to use at discretion; you need not fear it will be made a source of annoyance to you, or that anything will be neglected in consequence, you can trust to her judgment for that, nunkey; in fact, and as I said before, I am sure you will not object when business is over to a few hours spent in the softening, intellectual art of music. I am confident you will enjoy her singing, in true English style, the good old English ballads, as 'Woodman, spare that Tree,' and the like."

(This was the song the farmer always attempted at tenants' feast.)

"I dare say, boy," replied his uncle, "we shall be able to put up with a little on't, as well as here and there one; but don't give us too much, boy, or we shall have Molly and all the rest liking music too. Bothered if they won't be strumming away at the churn, and everything else by-and-by. And I dare say you won't come the high scream, called Italian, or German, or something of the kind, that I would as soon hear the Squire's eagles, and they one might reckon on a mile off nearly."

"Nunkey," returned Tom; "you shall have soft music, as soft as that produced by the serpent-charmers of India."

"Well, do as you like, boy; do as you like. I dare say all will be right in the end."

And now this musical conversation was suddenly interrupted by Molly, who entered bringing a letter to her master, which had just arrived by the post, which the farmer having taken, commenced searching his pockets for his spectacles. "A black seal, too," he repeated; "some one gone; no doubt the last enemy has been at work again, mowing somewhere in our field. Well to be sure now, what has become of my glasses? I am almost certain I had them an

hour ago," said he as he drew his hand out of his waistcoat pocket, without any result; presently, however, Molly came running with the same, having found them in the old family Bible, which the farmer had been reading in the morning.

"Ah!" said he, taking them from the servant; "just so; thought of my best friend last, eh? Just like us poor giddy mortals as we are, to forget the book which prepares us to meet everything in a manly, no-shirking manner,—the best chart through life, and a support in the hour of death."

Having carefully wiped the lenses on his red silk handkerchief, and having adjusted the same to the proper magnifying focus, the farmer commenced reading the letter, which proved to be from the distressed widow of Sharp, whose husband, on the previous day, had met an untimely end.

It appeared that, riding whip and spur from the races, on his high-spirited black mare, Bright Bonny, having won considerable stakes, that in consequence of the speed at which his favourite had been subjected, her brain became dizzy, producing a want of clearness of vision, so that on passing a donkey and pots, which the diseased optic-nerve magnified into an unnatural monster,

from which the animal shied, in consequence of which the rider lost his balance and fell over, breaking his neck ; and when discovered by a countryman, he was lying on the roadside, quite dead, the mare close to him, quietly nibbling the grass. On which the countryman took up the body, and carried the same home in a cart to his poor, unprepared wife.

“ Poor fellow, poor fellow ! ” commenced the farmer, quietly taking off his glasses, “ too suddenly removed, too suddenly removed. Lord deliver us from sudden death ; how necessary to be always saying that prayer ! The oppressor and the oppressed, how rapidly one has followed the other ! Sharp, boy, poor Sharp has gone, Tom,” said the farmer. “ His poor wife, too, I must call and see under what circumstances she is left ; she could not be accountable for the sins of her husband.”

CHAPTER V.

"I'll look for joy. Here come the neighbours all ;
Broach the old barrel ; feast them great and small ;
For I'm determined while the sun's so bright
That this shall be a wedding-day outright!"

Bloomfield.

SNIPP, the sexton, to whom the reader has been frequently introduced, after the excitement caused by the untimely end of the vicar had in some measure subsided, was as usual following his avocations, which the only certain thing in life renders profitable ; his appearance at this time betraying and arguing considerable mental anxiety, his countenance having grown haggard,—the whole man, in fact, altogether having assumed a dejected and care-worn appearance.

Snipp's duties were occasionally urgent and important, filling as he did the joint offices of sexton and clerk to the parish ; he felt much, too, the awful sudden end of the vicar, and it was with

difficulty for weeks after that he led the responses ; and on giving out the Old Hundredth Psalm on the Sunday before, many observed that his usually strong utterance became nearly choked with deep emotion. And now, as he was engaged again digging a grave, ever and anon thoughts, sad thoughts would impose themselves upon his attention ; for Snipp was and had always been a reflective man,—he ruminated over things which some minds allow and are glad to see escape from them ; so presently he ceased digging, and resting on his spade-handle, the right foot upon the iron, he gave way as usual to a little soliloquy, as follows :—“ ‘ The secret had better slumber,’ that was read out of the letter at the inquest ; that was the secret Farmer Brunt knew, when he fell out we’n at the grave. I thought I should have dug that secret out before this ; but no, not even at the inquest. No, I have never been able to get the key to unlock that mystery. My old bones ! if I could only get the key to fit that lock, I should be made welcome at a pretty many houses in the village,—they are dying to know all about it ; but there’s only one man, they say, that knows, and that is old Farmer Brunt, and I wish their hair may not become grey before they dig it out of him. Farmer Brunt is no choker ; things don’t suffocate him. I would just as soon expect

an answer from the old bell in the tower, as from him, on such a subject. All this comes now of our late vicar not having been married ; now if he had been a married man, his wife would have got the secret out, somehow or the other, by hook or by crook, endways or broadways, by nagging or fainting or dying right out. What dears women are to be sure, when they want to learn all ! and when they get it, they will tell their dear feminine acquaintances, at the same time telling them not to tell any one else ; and they again their friends, with the same injunction ; until the whole village knows it, chapter and verse. Lor, I shall never forget the secret I told my Betty, one fine morning, when I was first married to her ; she kept it a long time, nearly a month, I think it was, when it got very steamy ; there was danger, so out it came to her mother, and on it travelled. She never told any one she said ; but, Lor bless her dear soul, if she didn't no one else did, for no one knew of it but us two ; so I told her of it. I told her of it. ‘Betty,’ I said, ‘you can’t keep a secret.’ ‘Can’t I ?’ said she, with the greatest indignation, of all the world as if she had been the most tight old Catholic priest in existence. ‘I can keep a secret as well as you can,’ and she put herself out amazingly. ‘Well,’ I said, ‘I have just one more I should like to trust you with, if I could.’

That was quite enough ; inquisitive little dears women are, to be sure ! Bothered now if she didn't bore me, night and day, to allow her to help me keep that secret ; in fact she took on so, about want of confidence and the rest on't, that I hadn't it in my heart to see her in such a state, so I thought that I must give her one to keep. Yes, and in this grave, before all the ghosts of the dead flitting about this churchyard. I say I am sorry for what I did that day. I said, 'Betty, dear one, do you really think you could keep the secret, if I told it you ? She ? I believe you ; she vowed by all that was blue that she could and she would. 'Now,' said I, 'Betty, if you divulge it, it will be certain sure to send your old man across the herring-brook.' Not she, indeed, couldn't think of such a thing. My, how anxious she looked, and was to get the end of it out ; she was, indeed, as delighted as a child going to see Punch and Judy. 'Now,' she said, 'tell me, Snipp,—dear, dear old Snipp,' and she gave me such a kiss, that was quite refreshing, (after a year or so of married life), that it made me wish I had a secret for her to keep every day in the year. Queer fish, women folks ! 'Well, Betty,' said I, 'this I am goin' to tell ye, happened before we were married. My, didn't her eyes flash fire then ! and didn't she get more anxious than ever, for me to turn it out. And then I told her

a little fictitious kind of yarn, which never did occur, and perhaps never will ; but I am sorry I did so, because she declared she would never trust what I said again, to her dying day. Well then, when I saw her looking comfortable and calm, and going over it all again, just like a magpie, ‘Now,’ I said, ‘mind and not split, or I shall be subject to all I have told ye, and worse too, maybe, one little word would be quite sufficient, it’s a secret word, and would let out all the rest.’ My, didn’t she nag and go on again, to know that word. Now that was just the state I wanted to bring her to. ‘Well then,’ I said, ‘it is the word Bo—go—go.’ Now, I thought, she will miscarry that word, and no mistake ; not she,—queer fish, I say, women are,—she kept it as close as a cat her kitten. Now let me see, it so happened one day, when returning from this graveyard,—I shall never forget it, poor soul,—I was whistling away, spade on shoulder, when who should I meet in Lovers’ Walk but Sally Grundle. I knew Sally Grundle before I married Betty, a nice girl she was too, and no mistake ; but as true as I am already in a grave, I hadn’t spoken to her since,—perhaps I might have nodded, nothing more ; but upon looking up at the other end of the walk, there I saw Betty, in an awful black humer, and no mistake. Thinks I, ‘There will be a pretty kettle of fish,

there will be something to get through, I know. when I meet her.' And when I did, what a rage she was in to be sure, up to boiling-point! She flew at me like a tigress, she who had not very long before promised to honour and obey in all things. 'You good-for-nothing scoundrel!' she said, 'Bo—go—go! Bo—go—go! isn't it? I will hang thee! I will send thee over the fish-pond, you good-for-nothing fellow!' 'Pon my life it all sounded so droll that I couldn't help laughing right out; when on she went again, 'Bo—go—go! Bo—go—go! Bo—go—go! I'll hang thee! I'll send thee beyond seas!' But I felt sorry, although I couldn't help laughing, for she was awful angry, and I didn't like to see her take on so, and I had always tried to keep things as straight as possible in married life, and I believe that, if she could, she would have done for me at that moment, had my life been in her hands. Well, thought I, it is a precious good job it is no secret, and I am very thankful I don't possess one to divulge. Now Mr. Allaway had a secret, but no wife to help him keep it, or perhaps she would have been so careful over it as to get some one else to help her keep it too, and so very soon all would have oozed out. Well, leaving that, who knows whom we shall have next for a minister? The one who gave it away before will do so again.

The shepherd, and not the sheep, will be the first consideration, I fancy. I hope it won't be a candle-light, and all such nonsense, that the young ones are all of them up to. No, Snipp, unless the right preaching is kept up, we shall not keep the best people. Such teachers, indeed ! I wonder how they get on beyond this ? Peace, peace, eh ? look at our poor one that's gone, he liked candles, sacraments, and signs, didn't he ? Much good they did him."

Snipp now struck work, and jumping out of the grave made across the churchyard to the 'Jolly Sailor,' where he called for a half-pint of beer, remarking as he did so that digging was precious dry work and he required support, or instead of digging for others, he should soon require some one to dig for him ; when having cracked a few homely jokes with the landlady, returned again to his labour, and at once commenced rebuking the spade for being so idle during his absence. "What a good thing," said he, "it would be, if I could invent a grave-digging machine ! Well, there are patents out for less than that now, patent beer-taps, patent mouse-traps, patent chimney-sweeps. How it would sound, 'Snipp's patent grave-digging machine !' There would be a speculation now ! In this day, a man is thought nothing of unless he can say, 'That's

a spec. of mine,' and so they go on borrowing money to carry on their speculations, until they make a small speck of a good many. How many ways of getting money there are to be sure now,—companies for this, and companies for that, all getting the greenhorns' money! One set of managers establishes a bank to take care of the good people's cash; but I would as soon trust mine with the dormice in Sunny Wood. And then as to railway companies; there's no end to them; but as to a dividend for the poor shareholders, it is all steam, puff, puff, with their preference shares, and the rest of the gambling." But now, having ended his soliloquy, he set to work in good earnest, and having laboured for the space of an hour, finished the grave, which he designated a most comfortable one, and fit for any friend, shouldered his pickaxe and shovel, and made for his cottage by the brook, in order to sup off his dish of bacon and cabbage.

Business went on as usual at Old Farm. Mr. Thomas Brunt paid periodical visits to the doctor's; and the farmer having nearly overcome the deaths of Messrs. Allaway and Sharp, immersed himself in the best of all occupations for a troubled mind, viz. the business of agriculture, in all its varied branches. And as he passed from field

to field, felt thankful that his lot had been cast among the lowly, unambitious tillers of the soil, and that the spirit of covetousness, and lusting to be rich had never tempted him out of the legitimate course.

Molly was continually anxious respecting the domestic comforts of Old Farm, and attending to a little flower-garden, which had belonged to Miss Rachel, but which, during the late confusion had been taken possession of by chanticleer, who had taken upon him to invite self and dames into the forbidden ground, but whom Molly, in her anxiety for the safety of the children of Flora, had, by means of sticks, clods, and stones, endeavoured to convince that their company was otherwise than desirable, but which missiles, having been thrown wide the mark, only encouraged the impertinent leader in trespassing the more, as he merely stooped his head for the shots to pass over, flapped his wings, gave a challenging crow, and very coolly, and with great dignity, made his exit ; summoning his whole seraglio to do the same. The other enemies Molly had to combat, and who were perhaps more troublesome than the before-named bipeds, were the carters, who frequently in the absence of Molly on Sundays, and before crossing the fields in order to visit their sisters of the dairy, dressed in clean white gabar-

dines, pick one or two of the frail blossoms, in order to present to their favourites, but whom one day Molly having caught in the act, addressed in a very excited manner, as,—“I tell you what, you have no right in this blessed world, any of you, to pick my dear darling little flowers, that are always blooming so pretty ; and which poor dear Miss Rachel was so fond of. I only wish she’d seen you then, I do, snapping them off like that, you unfeeling fellows, to be so ignorant ;” which said speech brought broad grins across the open countenances of the gentlemen, who, with a few shrugs of the shoulders, marched slowly away from the rails, in an abashed and unbecoming manner ; after which Molly proceeded to gather up the stems and leaves, and thinking of her deceased mistress, at the same time gave a sigh, and repeated, “Poor folks have no friends to lose.”

As Tom and his uncle were sitting alone one evening, conversing of the circumstances and business of the day, the farmer commenced,

“Tell me, my nephew, have you made it nearly all right with Miss Vine yet ?”

“Yes, nunkey, I think it is nearly settled now.”

“I am glad of it, boy, I am glad of it,” replied his uncle.

“But you know, nunkey,” continued Tom, “I

like to thoroughly ascertain if the whole thoughts and affections of the parties most immediately interested in the event are properly reciprocated. You know I have travelled ; and am well aware how for a time the little dears can cleverly put it on. Oh, nunkey ! women are oftentimes artificial, made up of little arts and counterfeits, in order to deceive the sterner sex ; they inherited that, you know, from their mother Eve ; we must not take them at first sight, but a little time will prove all. The villagers, I know, have been in a great hurry, and married us long ago, but Tom Brunt is no villager. Miss Vine and myself agreed to understand each other's dispositions better, thoroughly if possible ; but now I think, nunkey, you can tell my father that the event is near ; the day not yet decided ; we have been so far cautious in order not to have any useless after-regrets, when too late."

" Right again ; quite right, boy," replied his uncle, giving his nephew the familiar slap on the shoulder ; " there is nothing like finding all out first, boy, so as to save all Divorce Court expenses, as so many are incurring just now."

It was a glorious and brilliant morning the morning of Tom Brunt's wedding. The sun arose in his most magnificent splendour, and as he ascended majestically from beneath the east-

ern horizon, the dew and ethery clouds became more and more rare and vapoury, rising higher and higher, until not a particle remained to intercept the rays of the monarch of day, calling into action the feathered warblers, refreshed by the mimic death of sleep ; and who now echoed forth in gladsomeness of heart, in simple, cheering strains, their varied melodies, as if ready and waiting to welcome the auspicious morning.

The inmates of Old Farm had been up at an early hour, actively engaged participating in one of the greatest events in man's history. Farmer Brunt too had gone over his farm unusually soon and given his accustomed orders for the day, at the same time ordering all to strike work at twelve o'clock. Mr. T. Brunt was likewise up and anxiously thinking of coming events, the change from the single to the plural state ; and which at this moment he anticipated and looked forwards to with more joy than ever he had welcomed the majestic barque about to carry him to foreign climes. He thought seriously too, as well as affectionately, of her he was about to take to be as near to him as life itself, never to be separated but by the hand of the last enemy ; at least for this he prayed, and promised within himself, to be everything to her who so well deserved the same. "Yes," said

he, as he turned over one drawer after another, trying to find a waistcoat, and then a collar, the whole of which proved provokingly contrary in fitting, “I know that many steps in man’s life are important, but this is far more than any other, as on this depends his weal or woe till death severs the tie. My father asked me if I had duly weighed all the bearings of the case; yes, that I can safely say I have, a thousand times; but I know it is all right, I am not unfortunate in my selection. Miss Vine, without any controversy, is one of the most amiable and affectionate of her sex, not conceited, yet very clever; no flirt, although admired by all; a person of superior mind; a lady indeed, yet, at the same time, a good domestic manager; she has wisely descended to give her attention to these little matters, without which, small is the comfort to be expected in married life. And besides having enjoyed the advantage of a refined education, set off by a dignified and interesting bearing; she possesses real vital religion,—fitting her for earth or heaven,—the greatest ornament a woman can possess; she is a prize, I repeat, it is my happiness to gain this day.”

“Tom, boy, Tom!” called his uncle from the foot of the stairs. “The breakfast is waiting, the eggs and bacon are getting cold.”

"Ay, ay, nunkey," replied Tom.

As Tom descended, the inviting repast awaited him, spread out by Molly in the large stone-paved kitchen, and in her very best style; in addition to which, she had not neglected on this occasion to pluck a few of her garden favourites, especially those adorned with a profusion of white, and having placed them in an old-fashioned green flowerpot, placed the same in the middle of the breakfast-table, to the no small delight of herself, repeating, as at a distance she beheld the effect produced,

"How mighty pretty they do look to be sure! Just the things for a wedding now they be."

Tom was not a little astonished to find the farmer already not only dressed, but in a complete new suit, consisting of drab small-clothes and gaiters, long blue coat with gilt buttons; and on his neck a white necktie, which Molly had been fumbling at the last previous quarter of an hour, in order to produce a decent bow, but in which she had evidently failed; as Tom cast his eyes round the room, too, he observed on the table, standing already brushed, a new broad-brimmed beaver. Tom evidently looked with gratified astonishment on such unexpected tokens of respect.

"Yes, boy," said his uncle, observing him. "For once again in my life, I am going to dress

all in new ; the last occasion on which I was so extravagant, was when I was about to take your aunt, as you are going to take Miss Vine this day. How well I remember that day to be sure ! Tom, lad, it seems but yesterday, yet it is nearly half a century ago ; but now I feel young again ; but oh, the scenes I have passed through since ! May the Lord make them a blessing to me ! But this is a day of rejoicing, and I wish you great and long happiness, boy. But as I was observing, I thought I could not do less than be smart on this occasion. You know, Tom, I like you even as a son, and I like Miss Vine too, even as a daughter ; this is a time to which I have long looked forward, and I am glad it is come. You, Tom, will, I know, love and be kind to that dear young creature, as you ought, or I wish I had never been born ; but I can trust you, boy, I feel I can.”

“ Depend upon me, nunkey ; depend upon me,” replied the nephew.

“ Tom,” said his uncle again, “ don’t be desponding or down-hearted about the means, and the rest on’t ; you shall have plenty, boy, and more than enough, even should your father forget you.”

“ Thank you, thank you. But by the bye, nunkey, let me give a finishing stroke to your necktie,” said Tom, which having soon accomplished in excellent style, “ There,” said he,

"you look now as well as the Archbishop of Canterbury." When on looking through the window, observed his father coming in his gig, and very soon that gentleman drove up to the door, on reaching which his servant jumped from the box, and seizing the reins in his white gloves, commenced adjusting the white satin rosettes placed each side of the horse's head. Tom's father shook hands with anybody and everybody, and he laughed "Ha ! ha !" and commenced chatting away, at railway-speed. "I have arrived you see, brother, in order to assist in fixing the nuptial knot ; you and I know something of it, brother, we have passed through the ordeal, have we not ? Tom, my boy, keep up your spirits. By the bye, brother, are all the preliminary arrangements made, are all ready,—parson, clerk, groomsmen and bridesmaids, and all ? Here, Tom, my boy, long happiness in the married life," said the sire, at the same time tipping off a glass of wine. "The young lady, brother, I believe is all I could desire for a daughter, eh ? handsome, interesting, good, and all that, eh ?" And so he ran on, presently taking a step to the right, in order to appear before the farmer's oval mirror, which, without any controversy, did him remarkable credit.

Now, Tom's father might have been considered

to be well dressed, and in the real, orthodox wedding trim, the most prominent part of which was a white satin waistcoat and stock to match ; the waistcoat standing out in bold relief, the gentleman being given in no small degree to obesity ; a large display of shirt front and frill contrasted exceedingly well with his full, red face ; he likewise wore a dress-coat of modern fashion and velvet collar, in the button-hole of which a white camellia rested ; a pair of patent leather boots adorned his feet ; and the whole man was crowned with a shining, spotless new beaver. Altogether then, Tom's father would have produced the conviction that he was a well-dressed man, and so he thought, as he passed to and fro before the mirror, smoothing his black hair and whiskers, which had been artistically attended to by his own professional barber.

“ Yes,” said the farmer answering ; “ she is indeed a good, clever, intelligent lady,—a better is not to be found.”

“ Ah ! just so, I see,” said the brother ; “ and what time do we meet at the good man's where the bride elect awaits us ?”

“ Ten is the hour appointed,” replied the farmer.

“ Let me see,” said Tom's father, taking out his heavy, gold hunting-watch, “ it is nine and a half now ; Tom, my boy, tell my man to take the

horse out and give him a good rub down, and get him well fed, as I shall want to be off immediately the happy affair is over ; ” on which he took another stride to the mirror, in order to prove that all was right in the vicinity of the throat, and then turning his back peered over his shoulder, in order to be certain likewise if all was right behind ; so, having worked his neck about a few turns like the vulture in the Zoological Gardens, settled it comfortably in the white cravat, when, again returning from the vicinity of the reflector, commenced, “ Well, brother, so you are quite satisfied with the match, although I fear there is not much brimstone for ignition ; a fortune in a wife, eh, brother, is better than a fortune with one ? ”

“ Yes,” replied the farmer, “ he has got a fortune there, brother, that I know.”

“ But still, money, money, money, you know, brother ; you and I have lived long enough to appreciate, is a fine thing. In married life it makes the mare to go, you know, stops the love flying out through the window, prevents bickerings, hard speeches—hasty words at the time ; but remembered at leisure.”

“ Well,” said the farmer, “ Tom will have enough, no doubt.”

“ Yes, very true ; I shall leave something behind

me I dare say, and to-day I intend giving him a check for five hundred pounds just to commence housekeeping, and to assist in carrying out the wedding trip."

"Quite right," said the farmer; "but don't say anything to the other party, it will hurt Tom's feelings and make things uncomfortable."

"Oh no, not at all, not at all," replied his father, commencing again to parade before the mirror, when presently, settling himself down in a seat, immediately opposite to that reflective invention of refined society, awaited the party, preparing for the journey to the Rev. Mr. Clearview's. And no doubt by this time, the reader has discovered that Mr. Brunt from town was not exactly a proud man, but a very vain one,—vain of his person, of his horses, of his houses, of his influence and importance,—proved by the no small stir he wished to produce on making his appearance; likewise the egotism in which he was constantly indulging would lead to the same conclusion.

At the Rev. Mr. Clearview's all was activity and excitement, servants hurrying to and fro, bridesmaids full of animation, busily engaged preparing themselves and bride for the eventful moment in her history. The bride looked pale and interesting, but thoughtful, full of woman's

hopes and fears; ever and anon giving expression to each by alternately smiling and weeping: it was an important day to her suitor, but far more to herself; she was that day about to give to another's keeping a pure, affectionate, uncontaminated, loving heart; she felt the deep responsibility, and more than once asked to be directed in her coming life with her future husband.

Think, young man, what you have in your power,—the happiness of another. Let not word or action, let not anything occur to alienate in any degree this affection and confidence; never forget how much more delicately constructed she is than yourself; never neglect her from day to day; your business, your engagements in the world are important, but this is not the less so. Be sympathizing in her little troubles and cares, which to you appear merely as a molehill, although to her a mountain; never measure her capacity by your own, or here you will make a great mistake. Let your affection in the morning be remembered by her through the day; your endearing actions her greatest contemplation. Be her rock, her prop, her support; and, like the trusting tender seaweed clinging to the sturdy rock, she will cling to and entwine around thee for ever; when the storm beats high, and the ocean of life proves tempestuous, and falls in heavy breakers upon thy head;

let not the midnight revel, the friendly glass allure thee away, while she who loved and still loves thee, awaits in breathless suspense thy return, with midnight candle.

"I could not do that," says one.

"The picture is too highly coloured," repeats another.

My friends, such sad pictures are of daily experience; many who once thought as you think, in practice are widely different.

After some little time spent in preparation, the gentlemen sallied forth to Mr. Clearview's, where the bride and her attendants awaited them, and where a crowd of villagers had already taken up their positions around the dwelling of the good man, in order to welcome the procession. Tom introduced his father to the bride, who in a very excited and blustering manner shook hands with her for the first time; the bridesmaid of course looked as handsome, interesting, and lovely as bridesmaids only can look. The doctor and his lady were serious and kind, and doing all in their power to inspire the bride with confidence and render her comfortable. Tom's father laughed, joked, talked, and shouted, until the house rang again, for he joked with anybody and everybody, and took off two or three glasses of port before any one else scarcely knew of

the circumstance; and before leaving for the church insisted upon kissing the ladies, right through, commencing with the bride, and ending with the doctor's mother.

The procession at last started; and having passed through a beautiful arcade of evergreens and flowers, constructed by the kind minister the whole length of his garden, and on arriving at the gate, a complete shower of beautiful flowers awaited them from the villagers, who stood with baskets full of these pure emblems. It was a very pretty sight, as they passed along, the white dresses and long veils of the ladies contrasting becomingly with the dark coats of the gentlemen; and it was gratifying and pleasing, to hear the many "God bless you's" pronounced on the bride by the poor women and children of the village, as they wended their way to the church.

On arriving at the parish church, of which the Rev. Mr. Allaway had been vicar, but now at which a superintending clergyman performed the duty, at the door could be seen Snipp, who gave a very polite salaam, and at once informed the farmer that all had been ready some time, and that the clergyman awaited them in the vestry.

The minister at once commenced with the long

marriage-service, composed, much of it, in ruder times, the greatest portion of which could easily be dispensed with, without committing any sacrilege ; on it proceeded, however, teaching the parties to promise to commit idolatry, by vowing to worship each other, contrary to the commands of the most high God ; but on arriving at last at the important portion, when the binding seal, in the shape of a gold ring, must be produced, the bridegroom was observed to be in the greatest consternation, and busily engaged searching his pockets, at the same time holding the young lady's hand, and repeating "With this ring I thee wed,—with this ring I thee wed," then searching again. On which the bridesmaids turned first to lilies, then to roses ; the bride fainted ; what else could she do ? while the minister, book in hand, anxiously awaited the appearance of the ring. Snipp scratched his head, and ever and anon shook that empire of intellect in the direction of the door, where stood the boy Jones, gradually introducing himself into the church, and, as Snipp considered, mimicked him, when he determined that he should not enter further into the sacred edifice.

"I will run back," said Tom, "perhaps, probably, I neglected to place it in my pocket ;" so saying, made his way in a hurried and half wild

manner through the aisle, and just about to tear off at full speed, when Jones caught him by the tail of his coat, and holding up the ring observed, "Here, mister, do you want this thing?"

"My dear fellow," replied Tom, "I thank you indeed a thousand times, and with all my heart."

"Ay, ay; yes to be sure," said Jones. "I should have gi'd it to ye a long whiles ago, only that old Snipp shook his ugly face at me, too much a deal, and I feared to come in."

Tom quickly returned, and having again inspired confidence in the palpitating and trembling hearts, the business proceeded, when presently the minister ended by asking God's blessing upon them, to which the farmer was heard to respond aloud, "Amen."

It appears that on putting on a new pair of trousers, in the morning, Tom had placed the ring in the pocket, but which pocket, through the inattention of the tailor's apprentice, was not sewn up at the bottom, consequently the ring slipped out on the floor, which Molly having found, dispatched by Jones; and this will account for the absence of that necessary at the wedding.

CHAPTER VI.

“ And this our life, exempt from public haunts,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.”

Shakespeare.

In the afternoon, the parish children were feasted at the expense of Mr. Thomas Brunt, in honour of the occasion, after which amusing games followed in rapid succession. The farmer and his brother spent the evening at the doctor's, and everything passed off as well as possible, when it is remembered that the principal actors in the scene had withdrawn, leaving the friends to their own reflections and resources, when it not unfrequently happens that a dulness will creep over the left ones, in spite of all their efforts to the contrary. The doctor thought of his niece, dear to him as a daughter; the farmer dwelt on his nephew; Tom's father's mind was busy with mercantile speculations, and

no sooner was tea over, than he moved a separation, which the farmer seconded, and very shortly one had returned to his farm, and the other to his merchandise.

As the farmer entered, old Molly could be seen sporting a cap trimmed with French white ribbon, and a favour of the same material pinned in front of her dress.

"And where d'e get that from?" inquired he, in allusion to the finery.

"Master Thomas gi'd it me this blessed morning," replied Molly, "and I'll wear it out of 'spect to'n a day or two, I will; and laws now, master, be they really married? I have been thinking it over, backwards and forwards, all the day long almost."

"Yes, Molly; and I feel it's rather too much for me," replied the farmer. "I felt a little down like when I saw them pass away, yet I am glad the boy has been married to that dear young lady."

"Well, mythinks there's nothing in't for master to fret about," said Molly. "You ain't lost your nephew; but gained a niece."

"No, not at all," returned the farmer; "it is merely a little reaction to which an old man is subject. They are only gone for a month, Molly."

"Well, I shall be precious glad," said Molly, "when they come back, for it has been sadly dull since Miss Rachel left us."

"It has, indeed, Molly," replied her master. "My nephew came in time to fill her chair a little; but now he is gone, I miss him much, poor boy. Call Bill, and I will go round the stables, and then to bed."

In a few days the farmer received a joint letter from his nephew and niece, informing him of their happiness and welfare, and stating how they were enjoying the scenery of that beautiful part of our country, selected by them for their wedding tour, likewise observing that, in consideration of their uncle's lonely position, they had determined on ending their visit, and returning to Old Farm in a fortnight, rather than prolong the same a whole month.

The farmer looked pleased, feeling glad that they had decided on returning sooner than he at first anticipated, and commenced paying much attention to Tom's pony, ordering the man to get him up from Cowslip Mead, to give him two feeds of corn per day, and to get every hair of his coat in the right place.

"Master," said Molly at breakfast time the next morning, "here's the boy Jones come, and says he wants to speak to you."

"Come here, Jones," called the farmer.

"Yes, Master Brunt," replied that worthy, at the same time scratching off his cap.

"Well, Jones, and what dost thee want?" inquired the farmer.

"Why, farmer," commenced Jones, "you know that last mop I hired with the Rev. Mr. Allaway, before he committed that awful su'cide up yonder. I was garden-boy, errand-boy, and tiger to him."

"Bah!" ejaculated the farmer.

"But I got sent away without a character, in consequence of his giving us all the slip like that."

"Well, boy, and how long didst live there?" asked the farmer.

"How long? Why, a terrible time, I should think it was—let me see. I think, to tell the honest truth, and not a word of a lie about it, it must have been six months at the very least; but there's no knowing, you know, Master Brunt, how long I might have kept there, if he hadn't made off like that, as I said afore."

"Well, Jones, I don't know anything particular against thee, boy," said the farmer. "What canst do?"

"Why, Master Brunt, I can weed the garden, attend the door, go errands, and act tiger."

"Bah!" ejaculated the farmer again.

"Now, Jones, canst thee attend to osses?" inquired the farmer.

"Yes, Master Brunt, I can attend to them very well. Sometimes I helped our groom, up at the vicarage."

"Well, then, boy, thee canst come and help in my stables a bit, and then, if thou deserv'st it, I shall be able and willing to give thee a character next mop. Now, you see that stable. You can attend to the pony that is kept there every night and morning; but mind he must be kept clean and well fed, and if thee canst keep him looking as well, or better than he does now, I shall be well pleased with thee, boy; and then there's all the pigs for thee to attend to as well. And the fowls and ducks will require looking after; now away, boy, and let me see y'r action." When, calling him back, "Here, Jones, let me see. I think it was you who took the ring to the church, eh? You lucky dog, you'll lose nothing by that, you rogue, I'll lay, when your young master comes home."

Jones attended to his duties through the day as well as it could possibly be expected; but as evening dawned, Jones's activity dawned and waned likewise, on which he commenced talking to the pony in quite a familiar style.

"Poor Bushy," commenced he, stroking the

little fellow's head, "you and I are something alike, both turned out of house and home; but how mighty odd it is that we should meet again; to have both fallen on our legs in the same place, isn't it now?" Waiting an answer, which he thought the pony returned by shaking his head, "Well, but I think we have found a pretty good shop, both on us. You hav'n't lost much flesh since we met afore. I thinks we shall be able to get along very well together, so that they don't work us too hard, eh, pony? You young rascal, we ain't been used to much of that, have we, Bushy? Now, my little fellow," continued he, "I will give you a bed for old acquaintance' sake; you won't want water to-night, and as to rubbing down, why, you will do very well without that. Master won't be round, and you won't be able to tell him much if he should come. Now, my pretty Dobbin, don't you roll and dirty yourself, giving your young ostler so much work, mind that, spiling your nice white coat, so that I shall never be able to get you clean again. Clean again," whined Jones, in a sort of singing tone; and, attempting to whistle 'The Girl I left behind me,' closed the stable door, and made his way towards the house, but in so doing observed his master making the rounds of the stables.

"My eye!" observed Jones, lifting his right leg at the same time, "I hope now he won't be going meddling into my business in yon stable. I am afraid if he should that he'll find out that that little rascal hasn't been rubbed down to-night. There he goes, however. Wo! wo! wo!" repeated Jones, rising his leg higher and higher as his master drew nearer and nearer to the stable. "Stop! stop! stop! Wo! wo! Whey! whey! Bah! There he goes. Gone in, by gore. Bother that, now," said young hopeful, taking off his cap, and dashing it to the ground, and scratching his woolly head with the greatest determination, "what a precious bother there will be now!" as he heard the farmer calling him to the stable. "Ay, ay, Sir; yes, yes, master," shouted Jones, running with the speed of a most attentive servant, after tumbling into the stable, knocked the light out of the farmer's hand, fell over the horse-bucket, kicked it under the legs of the pony, and caused the greatest confusion.

"Jones," commenced the farmer, after another light had been obtained, "did your late master go round the stables at nights?"

"No, Master Brunt, he didn't do that; he was allis engaged at this here time of night."

"I thought not, Jones, I thought not," said

the farmer. "But now, Jones, I tell ye this once and for all, I allis do; and then if you neglect your duty, boy, it's not so much your fault as mine. Now, boy, mind I expect you will allis do what I tell ye. You understand osses, Jones?"

"Oh yes, master, I learnt the whole secret on't from our groom."

"But you don't understand cleaning them, Jones, or you haven't dressed this pony down to-night. Look here, boy," continued the farmer, striking his hand on the animal and making the dust fly in a small cloud.

"No, Master Brunt, but I was gw'in to do it."

"Now Jones, mind, you mustn't be gw'in to do it here, but you must do it, now and at once."

Jones got the brush and commenced making as much hissing as a nest of irritated vipers, but little impression on the dusty pony; when the farmer took the brush and commenced teaching him how to get the advantage over the dirt.

"Can you read, Jones?" inquired the farmer.

"Not exactly read, Master Brunt," replied Jones; "but I can spell out a few words. But folks don't want to read to know how to clean osses; my old master, before I went to Mr. Allaways, said edecation spiled the servants."

"Do you know who made you, Jones?" inquired the farmer.

"Yes, I knows that," replied Jones. "It was God, I fancy; but I never sid'n."

"No, Jones," said the farmer again. "He don't let wicked beings, as we are, see Him; no man hath seen God at any time, Jones; but we know that He is, from what He does, from His works. The sun, moon, and stars, the trees of the field, this little pony, all tell us by their presence that He does exist."

Jones looked serious.

"You never saw the Being who made them," continued the farmer. "Yet they are made; not the smallest thing can come of itself, or by chance; then that unseen maker is God."

Jones looked bewildered.

"Jones," continued the farmer, "who made your jacket?"

"I don't know, master," returned Jones.

"Do you think it was made?"

"Oh yes, master, I am certain sure somebody made it."

"Yes, and are certain it did not come of itself; just so, and when you see the works of God, although you can't see Him you must believe that He is the maker of all," said the farmer.

"Yes, master," replied Jones.

"Do you know Mr. Clearview, Jones?"

"Yes, master, I knows him," answered Jones again.

"Then thou shalt go to his church and Sunday school, and he will teach thee many good things thou oughtest to know, boy."

"I don't like Sunda' schools, Master Brunt," replied Jones. "And I don't much fancy Mr. Clearview."

"Why not, Jones? why not?" inquired the farmer.

"Why," replied Jones, "folks up our way used to say he was not a 'spectable pa'son; our butler said he mixed too much with the 'Sinters, and pitched too long yarns without a writ sermon; Mr. Allaway used to read 'is'n."

"And that is what they call not being respectable, is it, boy? Jones," said the farmer again, "didst thee ever hear that Mr. Clearview owed anything he couldn't pay? didst ever hear that he got drunk; idled about; or told lies?"

"No, master," replied Jones thoughtfully.

"Well, then, you know, my lad, that he is a great deal more respectable than the man who keeps servants, and ossees, and all the rest, but can't pay all he owes; now, that's the man that is not respectable, mind that, boy. Now, Jones," continued the farmer, "rub this pony down, and on Sunday you shall go to our church, and I'll answer for it, you shall hear and see a respectable man. What shallow pates, to be sure, there are

in the world!" observed the farmer as he returned from the stable; "to put such ideas into the mind of that poor, and more than ignorant boy, that can scarcely say his letters; yet he endeavours to argue on the respectability of the greatest teacher in our neighbourhood. Oh! blind, wilfully blind; it is not respectable to tell folks downright that they are miserable sinners; it is not respectable to preach of the Man of sorrows being able to save such to the uttermost; bah! Then I won't be respectable."

Jones continued rubbing the pony, and telling him all the time not to roll in the dirt again, hissing all the while like a locomotive, until, with one hand on the mane, and another on the ribs he came to a halt, and remarking that good work required good rest, prepared to take the same. "Go to Mr. Clearview's school, eh; I hope not indeed," commenced Jones. "He jaws too much. I went there once; I didn't tell old master that, nor don't intend to. Let me see, it was a'ter I stole the apples from old John Giles's orchard, and was unlucky enough to get caught. He talked to me downright awful, he called I a thief and said I would go down, down into hell; I don't like that kind of talk, it is a deuced bad habit I think he gets into, trying to make a fellow feel uneasy; but however I shall not do so any more,

it's a low shabby trick stealing apples is." On which he commenced combing the pony's mane and tail, observing, "I wish by gore I was a pony, I do ; they got no books to learn, and get their coats brushed, and hair combed, for um. I wish somebody would comb my hair, and brush my coat ; I don't think I should go rolling in the dirt in a hurry like this little rascal does. I suppose now I must give him some water before I leave, but the bucket's empty ; perhaps now he could do without it, until the morning, could you, my pretty little fellow ?" inquired Jones, seeing the pony turn round at the sound of the bucket. "How I like you, my dear Bushy !" continued he, "only I wish you wouldn't drink so much, for the well is so far off; bless your pretty little face ! but I think old Laurence is about Old Farm, as he was about my first master's place, especially when the sun shines, for then he stretches me on the grass, and it takes all my resolution to get on my legs again ; I feel quite ill like, he presses me so terribly hard ; well, I hopes I shall not see so much of him here, as there, for Mr. Allaway never went poking round the stables at night ; he left all that to such as me ; but I expect by this, supper is ready." And away went Jones in the direction of the house, whistling "The Farmer's Boy."

Having entered the dwelling, the farmer at once interrogated him on the business of the stable, especially as to the watering and feeding Tom's pony.

"Yes, master," replied Jones. "Everything done right up; he was mighty thirsty, I thought he would have bust himself nearly."

"But thou dis'nt endanger his life in that way I reckon, Jones," said the farmer.

"Oh no, master, my other master used to say it would break their wind, to give them too much moist."

"Jones," said the farmer, "thou shalt go to Mr. Clearview's Sunday school, and see if they can teach thee to tell the truth, my poor boy."

"Yes, master, but they don't allis tell the truth, I heard the butler tell the housekeeper so, and he said that pa'sons sometimes get a little fresh too."

"Jones," said the farmer again, "do you think you always tell the truth? Did you tell me the truth a while ago about the water the pony drank? Now say no more, my poor neglected boy; it so happens that the well is close under my window, and no one has moved the windlass since the carter, therefore you couldn't have given the little animal water without my knowledge."

Jones looked confounded.

"Well, lad, there is plenty of room and time for thee to mend yet," said his master, "and we must hope for the best; but until then, I shall not intrust thee, boy, with the life of so valuable and sensitive animal, as a oss, depend upon that."

Jones looked sulky, and embarrassed by the farmer's knowledge, and determined within himself never to shirk, or lie again. Jones having eaten his supper, was preparing for bed, when the farmer called him, observing, "Now mind and say thy prayers, and mind who sees thee."

"Yes, master," replied Jones in a subdued tone.

"A real chip of the old block," said the farmer, as he turned away, "but we must have him to school, and see what can be done for him, poor fellow. His father was a bad hand, constantly in and out of prison, much good it did him, he only grew from bad to worse; we'll try another plan with his son; I'll send him to school, that is the place for all such crooked twigs; that will straighten them if any place will. Prisons for children! it is downright madness, a public expense, and one of the greatest evils into the bargain; for they go in shrinking fearful beings, but come out hardened villains."

Jones accordingly attended school in the week evenings in the winter months, and regularly on Sundays, Mr. Clearview particularly looking after him, until at last it was observable that the desired light had commenced dawning on that dark and natural soul, struggling to free itself from the binding trammels of ignorance and early neglect.

Farmer Brunt, too, had the great satisfaction of proving his theory to be correct ; by hearing and seeing Jones daily becoming more and more an industrious, truthful, and attentive servant, and as proof of which he continued in his employ as well as that of his nephew for many years.

The wedding tour having ended, the interesting party returned to Old Farm, very much improved by the short but invigorating trip to the West of England. Mrs. Brunt returning well stored with botanical specimens, collected on the Welsh mountains, and in Dean Forest ; she likewise produced drawings of Chepstow and Berkeley Castles, Tintern and Flaxley Abbeys, with the cathedrals of Hereford, Gloucester, and Worcester. Tom likewise had a choice collection of subjects of natural history, as well as geological specimens, procured during their tour.

The first few weeks after the return of the wedding party were spent as usual, in paying and receiving the usual complimentary visits, to the no

small consternation of the farmer, who said that he never remembered having so many folks to see him when he was married. "Things seem mightily altered," he remarked, "but suppose it must be so," he concluded.

The pony being attached to the phaeton Tom presented the same to his interesting and accomplished wife, of which present she became exceedingly fond, not allowing any person to drive the little fellow beyond a gentle trot, of which regulation the little animal became perfectly aware, and well knew its mistress, who frequently crossed over to the stable with an apple, carrot, or some other tempting morsel; for which little office she felt repaid by a subdued neigh, from Bushy.

In the evenings she amused herself and others by playing and singing for a short time a few English ballads and other selections from eminent composers. The farmer felt delighted to hear her music; only hoping at the same time she would not carry it too far; and didn't want his neighbours to know it, having always set his face against such amusements in farm-houses.

Molly became quite excited by the life thrown into Old Farm, and declared that she was quite glad Master Tom had brought home a new mistress.

Tom as usual smoked his pipe, attended to the

farm, and conversed with his uncle, who for some time had been suffering from a cold, which rendered him fretful and more aged in appearance ; but Mrs. Brunt proved an excellent nurse, and what with gruel, and other few simples, he shook off the malady. Tom, however, observing that his uncle did not appear to be getting younger, gave his attention more than ever to the cultivation of the farm, and very soon attended to the sheep, and cattle, as well as if he had been accustomed to the business all his life, as he took care to study the subject on scientific principles ; he learnt and understood the properties of the different earths, and manures, and other invigorators, so that the farmers in the neighbourhood declared that he grew more corn per acre than any of them ; and brought as good sheep, pigs, and oxen into the markets as here and there one for many miles round, until some of them actually remarked, “ Danged if he ain’t a wizard in disguise.”

Mrs. Brunt likewise managed the dairy and poultry, as well as her husband the cattle and crops, producing as much butter and as many and more chicks, than any farmer’s wife far and wide ; and in the evening, as before remarked, when the business of the day had ended her music came forth, under the influence of which the farmer became

edified, but not unfrequently headified, when Mrs. Brunt would stop and observe that she was sorry her music had such a composing effect, on which the farmer would wake up again and rubbing his eyes remark, "'Pon my word now, mythinks I was nearly asleep."

"Yes, nunkey," his niece would playfully answer, "I think you were indeed."

"Ay, ay, darling," he would return, "go on again, it's mighty pretty mythinks."

But in the midst of her varied occupations Mrs. Brunt did not forget the poor people, and schools, to which she had been constantly attentive, for her white pony could often be seen standing, by the village school-door, held by one of the ambitious youngsters, or at the gate of poor old Thomas Moss, or Betty Coster, to whom the messenger of mercy was truly welcome.

Farmer Brunt having at last given up the management of Old Farm entirely to his nephew, in whom he reposed the greatest confidence, more particularly spent his time in the garden, riding on old Jet, hearing Mr. Clearview's sermons, and studying his Bible; the chart to another world, as he designated the same.

Nothing for a time seemed to molest the happiness and equilibrium of Old Farm, until one night in the month of dark December, a noise

was heard in the neighbourhood of the stack-yard, to which point Mr. Tom Brunt wended his way; when great was his astonishment on arriving at the spot, to see the boy Jones, and Shepherd in the act of pinioning a man wearing a mask, and who had been discovered setting fire to a beautiful wheat-rick abutting on the stables and bullock-stalls, whom they at once secured, and who proved to be a cast-off unworthy servant.

Mrs. Brunt was exceedingly terrified at the proceedings; and the old farmer felt deeply sorry that any person in the shape of an enemy should have arisen against the young people. Molly declared that she should have gone right bang into fits, had she been Master Thomas, and was delighted to find that the constable had the offender in his safe keeping. And so the boy Jones grew more and more in favour with his master and mistress.

As time drove his restless chariot wheels, however, the farmer often complained that old Jet was getting very rough in the saddle, given occasionally to stumble, and soon getting tired of travelling.

"Wants more corn maybe," he remarked. "I'll attend to her myself, a little," and frequently spoke to the boy Jones respecting her welfare, as he found that lad becoming more and more trustworthy; and in allusion to whom he frequently

remarked that "that once more than rough colt would make, and was making a steady oss."

Molly progressed admirably with her patient and intelligent mistress, and frequently observed "that things went on nearly as well as during the life of Miss Rachel;" and often confessed that she felt very happy with her new mistress (who won her labour with affection, and who spoke condescendingly, and softly to the poor devoted dependant), and declared in the kitchen one day, to the rest of the servants, "that she would go through fire or water to serve her new mistress,—that she would," she repeated.

The farmer still went about as usual, either engaged in the garden, riding slowly, and more slowly, on old Jet, both apparently having come to the conclusion, that slow and sure were the best maxims; but it was frequently observed that he exhibited more than usual irritability of disposition; although he still waited regularly on the services, and the best of books was his constant companion. Farmer Brunt had now passed that bridge of sighs, viz. threescore years and ten, the crown of which precipice he ascended nobly and well; but it appeared evident to all observers, that the foot was unsteadily descending the other side of the nominated and promised

pinnacle of man's earthly sojourn, the descent of which is truly labour and sorrow.

"I don't know how it is," said he to his nephew one day; "but everything appears changing in the world. Mr. Clearview used to preach in a rich and clear voice, but now mythinks I can hardly hear him, and lose a great deal I want most to get, he is not so young as he was maybe;" the church too, he remarked, was getting terribly draughty; folks left the doors open, more than they were wont, and since the trees had taken to growing and stretching so near the windows, he could scarcely see the print in his prayer-book; old Jet too, he complained, became more and more awkward in her gait, and shook him terribly at times, although at one time the easiest beast that ever carried a master. "Mythinks," he remarked, "everything is changing. Tom, my dear nephew," he added, "I feel that before long I shall change too. And now I want to speak to you a little on that subject, because that time may come suddenly, as a thief in the night. Now I tell you candidly, boy, that I have made my will, and all will be yours (with few exceptions), and may God bless you with it, and make you a blessing. A few little charities and the like you know I am interested in, I leave in your keeping, knowing you will fulfil all my wishes. Poor faithful Molly you

and your wife will never forget, and the boy Jones too you will promise me to look after, and continue when looking upon him, to have faith in real education."

As he thus spoke old Shepherd, who had been sleeping and dreaming audibly on the rug before the fire, burst forth in a full-cry hunting-note, evidently in thought being engaged in catching rats or rabbits, or collecting the fleecy wanderers of the fold.

"Poor Shep, poor Shep too is old, but watchful, and he has been ever to me dutiful, poor fellow; I could recount many and many of his faithful doings, in his anxious protection of Old Farm, and the flocks." And he looked at his nephew.

"Yes," replied Tom. "He shall never be forgotten."

"No, I know you will not, it is not in the heart of a real man, to deal otherwise with man's dumb but faithful anticipating companions. Poor old Jet," continued the farmer, "is past work; long and steadily has she done her laborious duty, her shoulder we have to thank for much of the good and ease we are now enjoying; she came to me a reckless persevering overcoming colt, at times snapping all before her, never liking another oss to help her, but now, like her

master, she too is glad to rest upon her humble laurels ; let her do so ; let her rest ; let not the rain and pitiless blast beat upon her devoted sides, now she is old and comparatively useless. For twenty years and more I have used her, in every way ; for twenty years I have rode her; yet she never brought me to the ground.” Having made these few remarks sitting in his chair, he paused. “Tom,” he presently commenced again, “I die shortly; but it is only going home. I have been expecting this day to come ; my friends, my dear wife, my children, my Rachel, all told me this, in their departure. For this journey I have prepared, I have ever kept it in view, and I know in whom I have believed ; you believe in Him too, my nephew, and all your house ; then when the final hour of separation shall come, as it will surely come, the soul will soar above all earthly troubles, and be happy for ever in the presence of its Redeemer. I should like to see Molly,” observed the farmer. She speedily came. “Molly,” he commenced, “you saw your mistress die ; you now see your old master on the eve of that important event ; this will come to you one day, my good and faithful Molly.”

“ I ‘spect it will, master,” replied Molly.

“ Yes, Molly,” continued her master again. “ Listen to Mr. Clearview’s sermons, and teach-

ing, and believe and trust in Jesus Christ, and all will be well. You will never fear death."

"Yes, master. I feels amazingly afeard sometimes, I do," answered Molly.

"Yes," replied the farmer. "You fear death as the child feels going into the dark; the sting of death is sin, Christ takes it all away; only trust in Him."

"Jones," commenced the farmer again, seeing that lad standing before him, "you are young, boy, but some day, you may become old like me, and about to take the journey for which I have long been preparing. When you came to me you were like a young ox, unaccustomed to the yoke; you cheated me of labour, you lied to my face; but now we see better things, the accounts of you are encouraging; try to be good, hate lying, love your master, be no eye-servant; live with this impression ever on your mind, 'Thou God seest me!'"

"Yes, master," replied Jones. "I will do all I can, God helping me."

"Right, boy, right," said the farmer.

Soon afterwards the traveller wending his way through the churchyard in the parish where rested the remains of Miss Rachel, might have read likewise on the stone that headed her grave, and pointed out her position, the following:—

"Under this stone likewise repose the remains of T. Brunt, farmer, of Old Farm in this parish, who fell asleep in Jesus at the age of 75, in the year 18— etc. His end was peace." What a beautiful epitaph is that when true! fell asleep in Jesus; who can wish for more? After the trials, cares, disappointments, of threescore years and ten, to sleep in Jesus, and awake with Him in a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; after leaving the worn-out tabernacle of suffering flesh, the anticipation is worth the ordeal of this; to prepare us for that.

Reader; may you and I not fail to sleep in Jesus!

That was a pretty emblematic practice which originated with, and descended from some of Britain's forefathers, but now nearly gone out of date and fashion; the custom on one Sunday in the year called "Flowering Sunday," of scattering both tomb and grave with flowers arranged with taste and in very neat order; nor was this remembrance of affection without its practical utility, as on the previous week all who had friends lying in the graveyard vied with each other in raising the mounds, new turfing, and placing twigs in the form of diamonds, or other ornamental devices, in order to secure the turf, so that the whole yard assumed a very pleasing ap-

pearance. The author remembers when travelling in Monmouthshire, having been much interested in the activity displayed during the antecedent week ; there were fathers, husbands, brothers, friends, little girls, all busily using spade and trowel, carrying turfs, or preparing twigs. He thought it a pretty idea, and as he came more in contact with the business found that the greatest ambition prevailed in giving the best appearance to their own particular charge, observing likewise that in this as well as every other work some proved much more artistic and clever than others ; on the Saturday evening or on Sunday morning, the flowers were placed, and then the whole of the parishioners walked round the flowery Decapolis ; this practice was even carried so far likewise, that when a family left the parish they handed over the duty to their nearest and dearest friends. The author has often thought when walking through some of our ill-kept metropolitan yards, that it was a pity this fashion ever died out. In the parish to which allusion has been made this practice is still persevered in.

And poor Molly looked forward for the best of the flowers cultivated by her for this purpose, as ever since the burial of Sam, she had gone up to the churchyard, the evening before Flowering

Sunday, and returfed and garnished his humble mound with the frail emblems ; but now she likewise constructed garlands for and strewed flowers over the tombs of Miss Rachel and Farmer Brunt, and as she passed from master to servant, and servant to master, frequently repeated, " Poor folks have no friends to lose."

And now with the reader's permission we must pass on from this portion of our reminiscences with a simple promise to return again, in summing up the whole, and touch lightly on the progress and doings at Old Farm, etc.

CHAPTER XXI.

“ Those evening bells, those evening bells,
How many a tale their music tells,
Of youth and home, and that sweet time,
When last I heard their soothing chime !”

Moore.

AND now it was that Bob’s friends thought they observed something in him calculated to make a future creditable pedagogue. We say Bob’s friends, Bob himself having never felt any particular ambition for the office ; he never remembered admiring or desiring the position when at old Phil’s, and never remembered satisfying himself that he was becoming an embryo schoolmaster from a love of the profession ; but well remembers feeling a little uncomfortable, yea, almost guilty, when the head professor, in his preliminary speech to the inaugurating students, spoke somewhat in the following manner :—

“ Now, it is not unlikely that a variety of

motives have dictated, prompted, and encouraged you to enlist under the banner of public school-masters. It may be that some of you have taken up the office when everything else had failed, making the profession, as it has been too long the case, "the refuge for the destitute;" or it may be from the advice of friends, a love of literature, or perhaps," he said, in a lower and subdued tone," some from an idea of leading an easy life; or it may be, and I hope in most instances such is the case, from higher, far higher motives, not so much for self-benefit, not so much for sordid gain, as for the highest ambition a young man can aspire to, viz. that of benefiting his fellow-creatures mentally and intellectually; not administering to the poor perishing body, but the never-ending mind,—to spend, and be spent, for others, a real philanthropist, a patriot. In noble minds, mercenary motives will be of secondary consideration; but," he continued, "whatever may have been the feelings that have led to your presence here, I beg you will dismiss from your minds everything but a strong determination to take up the work on its own merits alone; to take up the office with a determination necessary for the mission, not only to work, but to work hard, being perhaps at times vanquished, but never beaten, always bearing in mind, feeling confi-

dent, that, let others think as they may, if good is to be done in our beloved country, the foundation of the same rests in a good sound liberal education. This conviction will be necessary," he continued, "or you will never make successful masters. Your remuneration, perhaps, will be small, and those who enter the ranks from mercenary views, I repeat, will, no doubt, meet disappointment; the country as yet not being alive to the importance as it should be of education, and consequently too often treats the schoolmaster as if he were *a chameleon*," he observed with a smile; but in making these remarks, I wish not to discourage any one present. You must hope for the best, and be content, if all other advantages fail, of having the satisfaction of handing down to posterity monuments, living monuments of humanity, better far than any marble blocks of dumb show with which we are acquainted."

The speech over, the students endeavoured to cheer, as became them, but which, Bob remembers, ended rather in a subdued whine. This philippic, it must be owned, had rather a damping effect upon many, Bob not excepted. He could not quite respond to the remark, that of course, and peradventure, the most noble had entered the profession for the sole purpose of benefiting

others ; the large ungracious world—self, considered last. Bob could not heartily respond to this sentiment of the professor ; nor can this be hardly wondered at, when remembering on looking round on society at large, he beheld most men engaged in benefiting themselves first, the wide world last ; fathers, brothers, neighbours, all appeared to be running the race of life with this end in view.

But resolved, that whatever his motives might have been for becoming a public schoolmaster, to abandon every idea that did not savour of self-devotion to the work ; but man is a frail being, and again and again Bob felt his ardour cooling down, as one disappointment after another met his vision.

But it was resolved and settled, that he should leave, perhaps permanently, the parental roof ; his father prognosticated this the Christmas before, when he remarked as well as his feelings would permit him, poor man. "Perhaps," he commenced, "this will be the last time that we as a family shall meet around this happy board on a similar festive occasion," and so it was ; he was right; as a family they never met again. Young people, appreciate these happy gatherings ; they will not last for ever.

Bob was now perhaps for a long period to be separated by time, distance, and expense, from

his own dear friends and relations, who had played with him, walked with him, read with him, worked with him, and going not to the delightful contemplative, sentimental country, but to the gasping, competitive, energetic town. He was now about to launch his frail barque on the tide of the uncertain future. At that time, too, Bob had not been quite weaned from home ; he had only been a month or two away at a time, at a short distance ; that an hour or two's good exercise would bring him in close proximity with all that is rendered endearing by that title.

He remembers, as he went oscillating along in the cold, uncompromising, bustling, matter-of-fact train, of having entertained soft visions of his receding village ; he thought of the beautiful hills, of the fertile valleys, the dells, and glens, through and over which, in juvenile years, he had often passed in search of mushrooms, cowslips, and violets ; he almost fancied, in spite of the loud snorting of the steam-horse, that he could hear the murmur of the rill, where frequently he had planted his mimic water-wheel, and where often, too, his frail paper-boat had softly glided down, and been wrecked in the sudden fall ; and where, again, he had carried turfs and stones, in order to compel it to pause, in order to form a rustic bath in summer.

He thought of the perfume and harmony of spring, when all around was one gay scene of birds and flowers ; he thought of the old hollow oak from which he had taken the owls' nest, with its downy sleepy youngsters ; and then of the old cottage, with its endearing reminiscences ; the garden, every tree of which he knew ; and the arbour, where he frequently preferred drinking the friendly exhilarating cup ; and then he thought of his dumb friends. The dog wagged his tail, and frisked and jumped, expecting he was about to be taken into the fields for a mouse or rat hunt ; poor fellow, he never saw his young master after that.

The tabby cat, with collar, and blackbird in his cage, all passed rapidly before his view ; he remembered their antecedents, and subsequent inaugurations ; and then he thought of those nearer and dearer : his father's subdued, but resigned look : he knew it cost him something, but submitted for his son's good, his sister shedding tears, his mother's anxious gaze, when she remarked, " You are going to London, my son (she had never been in London) ; may you be kept from every harm." He saw it came from her heart, her inmost soul, as he left her affectionate grasp. Yes, all this was recapitulated as he hurried along in the hard unsentimental train.

He was going to London ; but loved the country ; his taste had not at that time been vitiated by exciting and unhealthy town stimulus ; ambition and the like not having gained possession of the soul ; but he soon found that such was in some degree necessary in order to compete with his fellows. "And so I am going to London," thought Bob ; "how much is comprised in the word 'London' ! London is the world ; the world is London. Here, upon the far-famed river, upon which the metropolis of the world stands, are seen stately and magnificent ships from all the nations of the earth ; from every part of God's wide world they come, choking up every avenue and opening. Truly has the poet written of the Thames,—

‘ Whose ample breast displays unfurled
The ensigns of the assembled world.’

Here, too, traversing her streets, are representatives of all nations ; at one moment you are hustling a Turk or Chinaman, then shouldering a negro or Malay, the next moment you pass a tall, gaunt American glorying in his national costume and idiosyncrasies ; here a Russian, there a Prussian, Pole, Swede, Frenchman, Spaniard, German ; and crossing yonder with his music-box, white mice, or monkey, is the oppressed modern Italian, the degenerate Roman ; then passes a

wily Greek, having just ended an argument with an enervated Turk; and there at yon corner, crying 'Old clo,' is the despised Jew, destined for a splendid future; and passing in his calico garb goes the sneaking, deceptive Asiatic, resembling much in his disposition the tiger of his jungle.

"Tell me what nation, what people, are not represented in London? London is the world; the world is London. London, with her great wealth, pageantry, and gaudy paraphernalia of state; London, with her merchant-princes richer than kings; London, with her arts, sciences, and architectural beauty; her philanthropic institutions, hospitals, and other numberless foundations of charity. London, with her intellectual capacity; ever nervous, energetic London. London, too, with countless temples, not to the unknown, but known God, with bands of devoted ministers preaching his whole will to crowded and attentive audiences. And London, with her wretchedness, her poverty, her misery likewise, beyond compare; wretchedness perhaps surpassing any beside. London, where the hateful vice of drunkenness is rampant, and where temples dedicated to Bacchus meet you at every corner. London, where every vice is practised; where the thief concocts his schemes, and the gamester trusts to his luck. London, with her streets crowded

with harpies ready to pounce upon the unsuspecting and unsophisticated. London, where unwarranted speculation has become a vice ; and where man is too frequently led to suspect his fellow-man. London, I repeat, is the world ; the world is London. And London by night ! when the lonely and sullen tramp of the midnight police echoes through the arches and areas, and the giddy maniacal laugh of the pitiable fallen, or the hollow cough of some fast man issuing from his place of debauch or theatrical exhibition, is heard echoing through the gaily-lit streets ; to whom, and the officers of justice, they now belong ; but in yonder sequestered rooms business is still progressing ; the stakes are high, lost or won ; there at the dead hours men may be found, wrought up to the highest state of excitement playing away their patrimony and living ; the poorer but more cunning often becoming the richer. London, too, where thousands have become opulent by speculation, or on the contrary, lost all and ruined. London, where thousands of both sexes have sailed away like gay-rigged ships, on the stormy ocean, but wanting ballast, have dashed upon the hidden rocks, foundered, and become complete wrecks of humanity. Such is London. But I am going to London," thought Bob, "not perhaps to be ex-

actly active in the world, not to gain by trade or profession, but to give a portion of a short life to the acquiring knowledge. Yes, the life of the student may perhaps be considered physically idle; but not useless; it was in the retirement of the study the most sublime and grand inventions have been born, and thoroughly matured, and by which man has been benefited. In the study the triumphs of the steam-horse were discovered, and brought to perfection; in the study, again, its speed was outstripped by the flashing telegraph; in the study the mighty behemoths and leviathans of our seas were first constructed, their proportions balanced, and their resistances truly considered; in the study the architect builds his palaces, and calculates the strength, power, and solidity of his material; in the study too, all our most complicated machinery is constructed. By the study the agriculturist is assisted and the operative enriched; in fact there are few of the conveniences and engines of modern civilization, that have not originated in and emanated from the study."

And so he was thinking; when his attention was arrested by a rather loud and long argument, already fifty miles in length; that is to say, it had passed over that distance since the opponents had been engaged, warmly contesting

the point of difference. The argument rested between a country drover, on the one hand, on his way to London ; and a native of that far-famed city on the other, whom the drover in rather a spiteful manner designated a “cock-a-ny.”

The subject between the worthies, and which like all such subjects of dispute where both parties are beyond conviction, and when each is determined to maintain his own opinion, was not likely very soon to come to an end, rested in the propriety or otherwise of carrying a town or city map in your pocket, in order to discover the street or house desired in the mighty *mélée*.

“Now, Sir,” commenced the countryman, bringing his head in close proximity to the little gentleman’s, and placing his hand on his shoulder, from which that little slip of humanity recoiled as from the paw of a bear, tiger, or gorilla—“now, Sir, you see I am edecated above a bit, and perhaps a’ may be as well as yourself.”

“Oh yes, no doubt, no doubt,” replied the little gentleman.

“And yet I say again, and declare as true as I am sitting on this chair, stool,—seat—seat I means—I likes to be particular on all occasions ; then I say, as I am here and you are there, that them there maps be a downright lumber in a fellow’s pocket, a downright take-in, and no use whatsom-

ever. Now when I am driving a lot of ship through town, and finds I am out in my reckoning, I goes straight up to a peeler, a policeman you know—I likes to be particular,—and axes him to direct me ; maybe he'll set me right, and maybe wrong, he'll be sure to send me somewhere, they don't like to 'peer ignorant. Well," I say, "up I goes to'n, but I allis studies his phiz first ; you know I can read a little in that way. Perhaps, as I said before, he will right you ; but if he doesn't set you straight I say again that them there maps are like a Bible to a blind man, no use whatsomever, and I say that who are tolerably edecated. My old father, Lord bless him ! was amazingly particular with my edecation. A wonderful man was my father, altho' only a labourer. He knew well how to speak to a gentleman ; the Squire said he hardly knew such a man for capacity, and the Squire was no fool neither. Why, one day he axed him how much a ship would come to at so much a pound, but I forget it now ; my skull is much thicker than old dad's, but however he told him to a farthing in a jiffy. Why, Sir, the Squire's father was one of the judges, and he could keep the jury, witnesses, and all the posse of um going at a fine rate. He was a fine schollard and no mistake was the Squire's father. Lor bless ye, he could almost see through a mile-

stone," giving at the same time his opponent a poke in the ribs by way of fixing his attention.

"Who? who? what? what?" said that gentleman. "I tell you, Mr. what's-your-name?"

"My name when home," returned the drover, "is Phillpot."

"Mr. Phillpot, then," said the little gentleman, "I beg to inform you that I know not of what you are speaking, and I would thank you to be a little more guarded with your calls to attention."

"Why, bless you, I was only telling you about our Squire."

"Yes, yes. But, Mr. Phillpot, what has the Squire to do with the subject? I beg you will confine yourself to the point in argument, and not inflict this unnecessary detail and irrelevant matter upon me, especially when I can prove to a demonstration that, for practical purposes, a map of London is one of the most useful auxiliaries a pedestrian can be supplied with; for with a map of London, that is, always providing he has common intelligence, he can find his way anywhere and everywhere; but without the useful director he would be like a man in a desert, or a ship at sea without a compass, lost to all intents and purposes."

"My!" said Mr. Phillpot, giving a deep sigh;

"that was a good spell and no mistake. I like to hear a man going on like that, it shows him to be a little edecated, that does now ; but still I doesn't give up my pint or 'pinion on the maps for all the long jaw in London. I ain't learnt to come it quite so fast all in a breath like that ; a' maybe, I feel a little broken-winded when I comes to speak at times, but I tell it as a fact, that I would as soon have one of my ship to guide me as one of them maps. I allis carried a map at one time, and often stuck up in the street looking at'n sometimes five minutes together, but the further I got into'n the further I was out. That's my 'sperience of maps, they only, I say, bewilder a feller."

"Then my dear fellow," replied the thin gentleman, "let me tell you, you can't understand them properly, or I am sure you would appreciate them as well as your superiors."

"What did you say,—your superiors ? I hope no allusions," said Mr. Phillpot.

"Well," said the attenuated gentleman, "I call all persons who can't comprehend a few lines on a piece of paper designated a 'map,' inferiors, and you, if you are as you say, educated, should be able to understand such a print."

"You say educated," said Mr. Phillpot ; "you see I clips it a little. I like the near cut across the

grounds. Why old Gaffer Wilson had a map up in his schoolroom half as big as the railway carriage, that is one side ; I likes to be particular. Why, it was the whole world at one view it was ; and he was a capital old fellow ; he would drive it into them one way or the other, if it didn't go through ears and eyes he would send it through their skulls, that's what he would. I shall never forget, once I was standing in front of the map, the big map I mean,—I likes to be particular ; and he says to me, he says, ‘ You rogue, point out Botany Bay ! Where’s Botany Bay, you Turk ? ’ ‘ On the map,’ I says, ‘ I s’pose,’ for I was a little nettled like, and when I am like that I am an uncommon queer ship ; on which he gave me a box on the ear, and pointing it out said, ‘ There it is, you convict, and take care you never get a free passage there for your bad ways.’ Well I remember that spot until this day, and could point it out without any trouble whatsoever, and hopes I shall never get a free passage there. I likes *terra firma*, I do.”

“ Well, my good fellow,” commenced the little gentleman again, “ according to your own account, you have been nearly over the world, and yet you can’t understand the map of town. I tell you it is quite preposterous ! ”

“ Pre- what ? ”

"Preposterous," repeated the gentleman again.

Mr. Phillpot gave a bewildered stare ; but having arrived at the terminus or the end of their railway-journey, the argument ended likewise, Mr. Phillpot observing, " You keep your 'pinion and I'll keep mine. I'll use my tongue and you your map, and I'll get to the end of the journey first. Good bye, Sir ; I hope no offence. I likes a bit of a contrary ; it passes away the time amazingly."

At the terminus, as usual, there was much bustle and commotion ; porters running to and fro, calling and shouting, every one wishing to be helped first with his or her luggage, but each and all of whom were compelled to wait the official pleasure. But presently, seeing his box with its companions standing in letter T, Bob very soon secured the same, when commenced the usual scramble of ambitious cab and omnibus men, one and all promising to convey him at the cheapest rate. For a moment Bob was at a loss to know on whom to settle, but presently chose one of the cabmen, who wore the regular orthodox badge, great-coat, hat, and boots, who, on discovering the weight of his box, " Bah !" he ejaculated, " heavy carriage ! Books, I'll lay a wager."

Bob answered in the affirmative.

" Going so ? and so ?"

"Yes," replied Bob, "just so."

"Yes," said he; "bother the books, they always did perplex me, and always will I guess. I never could get them things into my head, and that's the reason I have to carry them on my back, I suppose."

Bob again inquired the charge.

"Why," replied he, "as your box is heavy and it is a long way to go, I couldn't do it well and with justice to myself and oss under five shillings. Now," said he, "don't be hard on a fellow. You are a gemman."

Bob was young at that time and felt proud of the rogue's discrimination; and agreed on the amount, which he found out afterwards was just two shillings too much; but London is an experimental place, you must pay at first for your experience, but ten years' sojourn in the mighty metropolis will render you as sharp as a native.

After passing through streets and streets which seemed to be endless and eternal, the rows of brilliant shops, with the constant tide of human beings put Bob in mind of nothing he had ever seen before; to him the sight was novel. He had heard and read of London; he really liked it better than he anticipated; the constant whirl of his fellow-men pleased him. But presently stopping, the driver told him he had arrived at the

place, and again seizing his box soon conveyed it into the building ; he followed the same, paid his fare, and then, although in London, felt himself a stranger and lonely !

This was the appointed day for assembling. He entered the room set apart as the reception-room. Students were already there, some looking gay and lively, others apparently sad and anxious ; and others, old students, already engaged with their books, but all waiting to give in their credentials, etc., and settle other business with the secretary ; and it did not require the eye of a lynx to see that observations were passed on each as he came in review by the senior portion of the students. But very soon Bob found himself likewise not in the place of the observed only, but the observer likewise.

CHAPTER XXII.

“ Hope, like the glimmering taper’s light,
Adorns and cheers the way,
And still, as darker grows the night,
Emits a brighter ray.”

THE next morning commenced the usual preliminary examination, before having passed which ordeal the probabilities of remaining were as yet uncertain. There sat the students, each with a sheet of blue foolscap before him, with the usual interrogations in Latin, English, mathematics, history, philosophy, with a host of ‘graphies and ‘ologies and other subjects, thought necessary for him to be acquainted with who undertakes to teach others ; all of which were required to be answered without any assistance from book, wink, or nod, although in some cases the smallest hint might have been of the greatest value and preponderance. No, for in order to prevent such a

piratical calamity, at one end of the table, sternly fixed, sat the Professor or his deputy, lynx-eyed to any such nefarious proceeding. But after sitting a day or two in this manner, this disagreeable, like every other in this life, had its termination. It was a time of anxious suspense, however, after the papers had been duly examined, and each one awaited to be called forth to hear his doom ; more particularly reports being rife of many before having been rejected, consequently not a little dejected as they left for their native groves and fields ; so as the door flew open and A. or B. was called in a distinct and audible voice, a sudden thrill ran through the whole, like a subdued shock of electricity, but each of whom was cheered forth by his yet uncertain brothers, who likewise congratulated others who had returned greatly relieved, having been informed they might consider themselves elected, and would be retained, unless inability to communicate and manage numbers should be proved hereafter. And so the examination proceeded, ever and anon one or the other returning with unmistakable evidence depicted in his countenance that he was not one of the elect ; for all did not pass, and others only with the skin of their teeth.

But presently open flew the door again, and Bob's name having been called, he answered with the usual "Here!"

As Bob entered the Professor was sitting alone at the head of the table, thoughtfully examining his foolscap sheet. There he sat, sternly determined to act faithfully and honourably between man and man ; if the young man proved promising he would be retained ; if otherwise he would have to depart, as sure as he was then within the walls. "Your papers," he commenced in a pleasing voice, "are not all that could be wished, yet they argue in your favour ; but you will have to work, and work hard to reach the maximum standard now expected for a public master ; all, however," he continued, "will be overcome by strict perseverance. You will be retained."

Bob breathed again ; he felt lighter ; a perceptible weight had fallen off his spirits, for he had no particular wish to be returned as a counterfeit shilling to his home and friends. Bob determined to study, and study hard, but illness frequently stepping in unfortunately prevented him exhibiting the energy he might otherwise have done. The studies rapidly progressed—comprising a multiplicity of subjects. Knowing that some day he would be called upon to give a critical lecture before the Professor and students, our embryo schoolmaster took care to prepare drawings, diagrams, etc., in order to illustrate his subject ; when, having passed this final ordeal,

and having received the congratulations of his comrades, he again dived into the studies ; but the time appointed being unequal to the work many of the students rose at four o'clock in the morning, and could be seen working away by gaslight, and being full of emulation ignored ease for the time. But here, as well as elsewhere, where congregating man is to be found, interesting associations were formed. Many, although students, were jocose and comic fellows, noticed for their witticisms, at whom many of the most abstracted were compelled to smile in spite of themselves; but the majority were constantly engaged as for life almost, acquiring knowledge and the honours thereto attached. One whom the students designated "Gourmand," from his wonderful aptitude for Euclid's Elements, which study was evidently his delight, and over which he would sit for hours abstracted from everything around, thoroughly solving and digesting his propositions, after which pass through them on the black-board before the Professor. It was really worth while hearing his clear demonstration of the propositions, occasionally dropping an axiom or postulate, when he would return, neatly gather up the same, and advance with the greatest rapidity. The students much admired his elasticity of memory when thus engaged, chalk in hand, solving problem after

problem, bringing in every definition, postulate, or axiom required, but after which an unearthliness appeared in his eyes, which protruded more and more ; the cheeks flushed and became every day more hollow, and his whole physical contour thinner and thinner as his mind became stouter and more and more retentive. Now, it so happened that Bob's dormitory was double-bedded, the second bed being occupied by this student. Bob had observed that for several nights his sleep appeared uncertain, and that he frequently talked and laughed in a most incoherent manner, at the same time going over portions of various problems. As, "From the point A (postulate one, which grants that a straight line can be drawn from any given point) draw the line A B. Problem, to cut off a segment from a given circle, which shall contain an angle equal to a given rectilineal angle. Let A B C be the given circle, and A the rectilineal angle ; it is required to cut off a segment from the circle A B C that shall contain an angle equal to the angle D. Well done, old fellow, that statement will do very well ; now then for the rest. Draw the straight line E F touching the circle A B C on the point B, and at the point B, in the straight line, B F, make—Bother ! I can't remember what is to be brought in there. Oh, my head ! I can't go on ;

but Euclid was a fine old fellow, a fine old fellow was he. I think now I will get my razor and have a comfortable shave. Perhaps it is time to get up.” This was about four in the morning and quite light, so that Bob could see every movement; he saw him draw from the drawer his razor and, holding it in his hand, come creeping to his bedside. “Hullo!” said he, as in astonishment, and looking down at Bob, “who have we got here, I wonder,” his eyes fired with wickedness. “Who dares invade my territory?”

Bob observed an unpleasant, vicious, sarcastic grin pass over his features, but vacant and empty. Bob sprang up in bed; “What are you after?” said he. “Go back to bed, Sir, go back to bed immediately. I will ring the bell, I will have all the students here in a moment.”

“No, no, don’t,” said he; “I will, I will go.”

The razor dropped from his hand, and he went cringing and creeping to his bed like the balked tiger to his lair. Poor fellow, he rose the next day, but, alas! not to study; the mind strained to its utmost tension had snapped, and in a few hours he was hundreds of miles from his late scene of action and proud mental ambition. The mind is a strange paradox; when to all appearances strongest, glorying in its greatest elasticity, rejoicing in its utmost powers of retention, when

ascending higher and still higher, how frequently at that very moment, when at its greatest altitude, when revelling in its brightest refulgence, like some vain, baseless, pyrotechnical temple, crumbles and vanishes in a moment ! His was a mind of superior structure, a memory of excellent retention, but, having been overtaxed, ill-used,—snapped and vanished.

So things advanced ; ever and anon a student occasionally leaving from various causes. London, with its allurements, proving, not unfrequently, too strong, and its fascinations too great, caused a few to forfeit credit, renown,—all. “Very weak, indeed ;” just so, but not more than thousands have been before, and thousands will again unless held by a superior Power. For the world is like the inviting, enticing quicksands, which outwardly appear white, firm, sparkling, beautiful ; but underneath the surface soft, insinuating, engulfing, false, and dishonest.

It so happened that Bob and a fellow-student one warm day made their way to Woolwich Marshes, in order to enjoy the luxury of a bath free from all annoyances ; they had but just commenced this refreshing exercise, when a large Irish steamer, outward bound, hove in view. Observing that the mammoth as she passed drew the waters away, the bathers without thinknig

what a retaliation the same was making in the trough of old Father Thames, followed it, when back came the waters with overwhelming fury, dashing over the bathers, rushing up the bank, picking up the clothes left on the shore and thought out of reach of all harm, and in their return drawing the bathers after them ; they felt no more than feathers before the adversary, as powerless as infants ; in vain they struck out, down they must go. And now Bob felt himself forced along on hands and knees, the flints cutting him very much. He had lost his friend too, he knew it ; he knew he was at the bottom of the Thames, without the least power of rising. He thought he was drowning ; he felt he must be drowned. Memory was active ; he thought of his friends ; what would they think when they heard of his untimely end ? Would they hear of it ? how ? who knows he came to bathe ? Such thoughts passed quickly through his mind, with a recapitulation of many events in his past history, generally forgotten, but now vivid. He felt no pain, an easy swoon crept over him. On again coming to himself, he was lying on the river's brink, his friend by his side, using the means of restoration, who informed him afterwards that not having entered so deep in the water, after a few tossings and bruises he was thrown high and dry ;

but with the overwhelming horror that Bob had gone for ever; but presently, with another tremendous rush, he saw his body—but lifeless, as he supposed—propelled forward to the shore by the angry swell; he dragged him upon the bank, and commenced the usual simple means, when soon he had the satisfaction of seeing him speedily restored to life again. For that providence Bob felt deeply thankful, having heard afterwards of a similar case, but with a fatal termination.

Bob was one day sitting as usual, abstractedly engaged over his studies, when suddenly entered the porter, who informed him that his immediate presence was required in the hall, to which room he immediately repaired; when, confronting him, stood a rather robust-looking countryman, of florid complexion and sanguine temperament, and whom he observed, as he advanced, minutely scrutinizing him from head to foot, evidently deeply engaged comprehending his physical proportions; much in the same manner, probably, as he had frequently done when striking a bargain for a horse, ass, or other animal in the country fair, or mop; to whom Bob made his honours, which his friend promptly returned, which, if not in a graceful and dignified manner, certainly possessed the advantage of having been tendered with a familiar air.

"Well, Sir," he commenced, "I think you will do, if I can judge from 'pearances; you seem about the one to manage the young Ishmaels, for they be an outdacious lot of Arabs to overcome though, and if you failed in this respect, you wouldn't be the first that has done so, I can tell ye, as the gentlemen here well knows;" looking round on the managers, who one and all, smiled and responded "Just so, just so."

The gentleman to whom the master was now thoroughly introduced, was a wealthy agriculturist and land proprietor, but no stranger to the before-mentioned gentlemen, being a well-known advocate of liberal education, and prided himself in advancing the rising generation, which feeling arose, he informed Bob some time afterwards, in not having enjoyed the same advantages himself, which neglect arose not from want of means so much as from want of inclination himself; as when a boy he evaded the necessary studies, preferring, on all occasions, the freedom of the farm to the more sedentary but intellectual occupations of the schoolroom, to which an over-indulgent but foolish mother never obliged him to go, lest it should injure his health, which idea the son soon fell in with, more especially when confirmed by the family doctor; so the result ended in his mental powers being sacrificed to his phy-

sical development, for which he said he should blame his mother to his dying day.

"I regret it, I regret it," he repeated, "the loss I sustained in the freshness of my youth; therefore I am determined to do all I can for others :" thus he concluded the subject.

Bob often thought, however, that had it not been for the absence of like privileges, the gentleman considered he might have been a J.P., M.P., or F.R.S. (the latter of which often stand for a Fellow Remarkably Stupid),—or some other great position in his neighbourhood.

This, then, was the gentleman who came in search for the desired pedagogue. Not trusting to the foundation to send the right and proper individual, for, as he said before leaving the country, he was not going to buy a cat in a bag, nor a pig in a poke,—introduced himself to the managers—who one and all declared him a diamond in the rough, a casket in which was hidden a rich jewel—something in the following manner :

"Well, gents, you see as I am come to pick out from your place a most likely master that can manage the young ones, and right up to his work in everything connected with the young gentry. I want a young man now," he proceeded, bringing himself up to a firm position, and moving his hand and foot in harmony with

his words,—“I want a man that has got eyes before and behind; you know what I mean, a sharp one, you know.”

“Exactly, exactly,” responded the gentlemen in chorus.

“Yes,” continued Mr. Meadows, “I want a man that has got ears and mouth, with a pretty considerable portion of head, and not too thick-skulled like, one that has strength of muscle, energy of purpose, and a regular down-all when necessary; for the last master we had they regularly fought and beat, and he was obliged to cut and run: he was no manner of use; could never establish his authority, and with all his learning wasn’t worth a shilling a quarter; for it is a certain fact, gentlemen, before you can govern the young Indians, you must subdue them; I say again, gentlemen, that with all his learning, he wer’n’t worth a fig for the situation; so thinks I, I’ll just go up to London, and pick out a most likely one myself.”

“Good, very good, very good; you shall have a proper person,” replied the gentlemen, for be it known they always had a proper person to meet every contingency *pro bono publico*. So whether suitable or otherwise, Bob was chosen, the gentlemen giving him a satisfactory glance, made a profound salaam, and departed. Bob

returned to his propositions, but found his mind anything but concentrated on the lines, curves, and angles ; he could not help recapitulating in his mind how he should enjoy his lost fields and groves again, to hear nature's gay and free choristers, and inhale the balmy, invigorating atmosphere, filled with the aroma of herbs and flowers ; *sans* smoke, *sans* noxious gas and volatile malaria, to be inhaled in close pent-up cities and towns.

Bob liked the idea much ; but had ever disliked to think even of the probability of being sent to some chimney-crowned manufacturing town, with air impregnated with carbon and other gases, belched forth from a thousand wide-mouthed smoke-conductors, and perhaps the schoolroom a dungeon, under some place of worship. Bob, in reality, felt thankful that his lot was so delightfully cast.

It too often happens that schoolrooms are placed in some dirty bye-place, or in some back lane or alley, in the very worst part of the town, as if the managers of the same were ashamed of their noble undertaking. This should never be the case, but if possible the schoolroom should be built in the very best part of the town, fully in view, and should be considered as one of the greatest honours and ornaments to the place.

What can compare with education ? “ The soul without knowledge is not good.” Were committees more particular in this respect, and render their schools more ornamental and conspicuous, they would be far more successful in their speculations on this head.

So having written his farewell address as was usual, and which was required of him to be in rhyme, he commenced as follows :—

“ Farewell to my brothers, farewell to the college ;
Farewell to my tutors, so well stored with knowledge ;
Farewell to the persons who long had a share
The domestic concerns of the student to care ;
Farewell to the studies, farewell to the books ;
Farewell to the dormitories, neat little nooks.

* * * * *

Again, my dear brothers, I bid you adieu.
You know I am call’d, you know I must go :
Though distance may sever, and time again part ;
Will still think with pleasure and gratified heart
Of you all.”

The farewell address over, and the friendly congratulations of the students ended, Bob soon found himself again on the railway, bound for his new destination.

What a variety of thoughts must be running through the minds of the company as the train hurries on, swiftly passing one little unnoticeable place after another, condescending to stop only at those considered of importance.

In the carriage was a miscellaneous motley company, from the well-to-do saving man down to the seller of shrimps, in which vocation the vendor was as actively engaged, as any fishmonger in Billingsgate. Some of the passengers were busily chatting and laughing with their next neighbour; others, in order to drive away *ennui* during their transit, were attentively perusing papers and books, over which they ever and anon expressed feelings of delight. Others, appeared in deep thought, perhaps recapitulating what they should say when they met their country friends, or what they said on leaving their metropolitan relations. Others, again, had endeavoured to render the journey short by inviting sleep to their aid; so on they went snoring a duet, in unison with the snorting of the steam-engine.

In the first seat sat an old gentleman, preferring, as he said on entering, to ride with his back to the horses; but had his real motive been analysed it would have been proved to have been to place his back to the cold head-wind, he having, during his long years of contention with storms, found out the warm and cold side of any subject, a railway carriage not excepted; there he sat dogged, and determined not to give up his place to any longing male or female, he having it by right of having waited for it some

three-quarters of an hour before the train drew up to the platform at the terminus ; and now he intends keeping the same ; and there he sits with body and soul wrapped up in a drab great-coat, calculating his profits and thinking over his speculations.

Near the door was a young man, considerably careworn for his age, having the appearance of one having been roughly handled, yet his elasticity and buoyancy of spirits seemed to raise him above his present difficulties, and with perfect good humour engaged himself in assisting the more helpless to mount the unaccommodating few and far-between carriage steps.

And there presently entered the carriage preceded by his waistcoat, and looking of some importance, is a man wearing a wide belt over his shoulder, on which was depicted the crown of England, and a superscription which reads “John Trapper, ratcatcher to H. M. Dockyard.” Really, until this moment Bob did not know there was such a functionary in H. M. S. as John Trapper. With him entered likewise a poor thin slip of female humanity, a real attenuated bodkin, a shadow of a woman, but who was very attentive to the big man her husband ; she appeared to anticipate, indeed, his every want. She carefully lifted his gouty leg, placed it on the seat, drew his

pocket-handkerchief from his pockets, rested the leg upon it, after which a subdued growl would proceed from that mountain of flesh, meaning, "That will do." She was his feeder likewise, the jackal or lion's provider, for from the bag which she carried she drew forth hard-boiled eggs, periwinkles, bread and cheese, and a bottle of strong water, which had a great attraction for the man, and all of which she placed before John Trapper, and which he set-to demolishing with the greatest determination ; after which his poor little wife placed his head against the railway carriage, with a handkerchief between it and the boards, ready to commence his sleep. All which she carried out with the same tenderness and system as a mother would show towards her infant.

Bob was much struck with the devotion of the poor creature, under which system she herself appeared to have grown exceedingly thin and wretched ; while on the other hand, her big patient had become plethoric and full.

How this piece of vulgar humanity had succeeded in impressing the poor little woman with her duty and his importance, served Bob for a subject of speculation. "Oh, John Trapper !" thought he, "I presume you must have addressed her something in the following style :—'Betty, I say Betty, I simply ask ye, girl, what d'e

think would be the good of admirals, captains, wiggies, and the whole possy of 'um, if I didn't catch the rats ? Answer me that, woman ! I tell ye, Betty, as I am a living sinner, there wouldn't be a ship in the British navy worth a penn'orth of cheese, if I didn't catch the vermin ; I tell ye they would one and all go to Old Davy, as sure as they are what they are." And so, doubtless, it was that Betty became impressed with her husband's importance, believing him to be the saviour of the British navy.

Oh, John Trapper ! John Trapper ! did it never occur to your contracted brain, that one day iron would disturb your profession ? iron *versus* teeth. What do you say to that, John Trapper ?

Yes, there sat John Trapper, with great body and little soul ; big head and small heart ; feeling convinced that owing to his professional vigilance depended the efficiency of the Royal navy.

" That must have been a third-class carriage," methinks I hear some interesting reader remark. Yes, quite right. I admire your sagacity, dear reader ; but far more convenient for a poor student than A 1.

After taking up and putting down again, after sundry alarming and shrill whistles, and serpent-like hisses, in order to apprise the travellers of approaching tunnels, it came to Bob's turn to

alight, which he always did, from railway carriages, with much pleasure. And now he found himself in the society of his friend, who came to the college to pick out a most likely master, and whom we recognize again as Mr. Meadows. Now when in town Mr. Meadows had promised to meet and convey the schoolmaster in his own conveyance ; and so, thinking of riding the seven country miles, Bob had foolishly indulged himself by placing his feet that morning into a new pair of London-made boots. Judge then his astonishment when his conductor coolly remarked, "Good walker, I s'pose :" adding, "my trap is already loaded with merchandise, bought in town the day I saw you ;" and then quietly remarking, "We don't like to make too much of you at first."

"A very bad plan," answered Bob, and one he himself, he observed, never adopted.

Having now passed some three miles of their journey, and the horse quietly wending his way up a rather steep hill, whose name might have been Eternity, as there was, in Bob's imagination, no end to the same, and the horse drawing from side to side, making a very gradual incline, as if he really understood the principles of mechanics. So they were progressing when—

CHAPTER XXIII.

“The cottage homes of England,
By thousands on her plains,
They are smiling o'er the silv'ry brooks,
And round the hamlet fanes.”

Hemans.

PRESENTLY Mr. Meadows broke silence by commencing, “You see I have done this out of my own head, and it is rather a perplexing affair. Too many cooks spoil the broth, say I.”

“I don't quite understand to what you allude, Sir,” replied Bob.

“You don't? Well, you will know more when I have told ye,” said Mr. Meadows again. “You see we can't keep the school committee together; they are always splitting upon some point or the other, and then there's a terrible ado. I don't wish to say anything against the ladies, dear creatures as they are; but I must confess they have given us much trouble in this business; so

much talk and insinuations that the committee is now broken up altogether, and I take the whole responsibility upon myself ; and see how that will answer. In an evening or two there will be a meeting for the purpose of settling accounts, and dropping the school ; then I intend introducing you, and saying, ‘ No, stop, I shall take it upon myself ; and here’s a gentleman from London that will carry it right out for me.’ ”

The master did not much approve of this novel, diagonal mode of introduction, but still did not dislike his friend Mr. Meadows, and certainly in this matter he appeared to be acting a noble and disinterested part.

“ You see,” he whispered, advancing close up to him as they drew near the village, as if the very trees had ears and were loquacious,—“ you see, some of our ladies have not as yet quite settled the point whether education is good or otherwise for the working classes ; some of them still declaring that it will spoil the servants ; but, Sir, I have not had much learning myself, but I see it as clear as noonday, that if good is to be done, educating the rising generation will do it. As to spoiling the servants, they are that already. And now I intend trying another plan. I will give them all the learning their time and talents will allow, and chance the rest ;

and to this I'll stick hard and fast, leave it who may."

And now, with the reader, I will pass through the village, which proved itself a real country village indeed, both dull and lifeless; and as the master thought, with few inhabitants; and the question which puzzled his foolish bacheloric brains was, "where the children were to come from to fill the school!" But having been assured by Mr. Meadows "never to despair on this head, as children," he remarked, "were as plentiful in the parish as acorns and nuts in autumn. Children!" he repeated, "why they spring up here like mushrooms in my six-acres after a heavy dew; bless you! I have seven myself. Why," he continued, "in this part, children are a rule, not an exception."

Bob certainly felt relieved on this head. After having multiplied twenty by seven, he at once saw that a very few families such as his friend Meadows boasted, would be sufficient to fill a very important school indeed.

The village, as before remarked, was a true country village in every respect; on your right, lying in thick repose, was the public horse-pond, which administered *aqua non pura* to the whole domestic Pachydermata and Ruminantia of the neighbourhood; there the lazy ploughboy Giles

could be seen riding his master's sturdy labourers breast-high into the fluid, already wet with perspiration, in order to quench their thirst, and wash away, in an easy manner, the dust and dirt accumulated on their athletic limbs ; not for one moment considering that, in so doing, he was sowing the seeds of chill, rheumatism, and premature decay in his master's valuable servants. The pond was likewise the grand rendezvous of all the aquatic bipeds kept for pleasure or profit by the inhabitants of the village ; there gracefully sailing along before the breeze, or energetically diving from side to side, they spent much of their little day. And here, too, the masculine juveniles delighted to congregate with rod, line, and crooked pin, on which was transfix'd the lowly earthworm, writhing and twisting in various agonizing contortions, until a friendly but voracious newt or stickleback put an end to its sufferings by boldly swallowing the whole. Here they stood for hours together, fishing for the little aquatics, with as much anxiety and hope marked in their chubby countenances as was ever exhibited by salmon-fisher or Arctic whaler. Opposite to the pond stood the old inn, with swinging, creaking sign-board, standing from the house on a pole on the green, and on which was depicted, by the village artist, a

representation of a red lion at bay. Was there ever such an animal as a red lion ? I never saw one; and, judging from the picture, the artist likewise never sufficiently allowed his optics to rest upon an original king of the forest, in order to get a correct outline ; for there, instead of a lion at bay, stood that animal—to Bob's imagination, in a fright, more than in any other attitude he could conceive ; for that which ought to have been a flowing mane, represented more the quills upon the fretful porcupine, or the extravagant starched frills or ruffs in the time of Queen Bess, rather than the graceful auxiliary possessed by that noble animal in his natural condition ; the tail, likewise, stood out straight, rigid, and bare, as a pump-handle, instead of that gracefully oscillating appendage ; in fact, the whole was a downright caricature of his majesty.

The master was attentively gazing at this work of local art, when his friend informed him that this was the Red Lion, and the best inn in the village. Opposite the inn, on the other side of the Green, stood the clergyman's residence, which happened to be one of the best in the neighbourhood ; and the garden attached also looked gay and interesting, as over the wall hung the graceful lilac and laburnum, for the good man was a complete botanist, and prided himself

in annually producing some of the finest children of Flora and Pomona. The clergyman, too, was more fortunate than many of his brethren, who have imposed upon them large parishes and large families ; but too often very slender means ; here the reverse being the case—a small family, a small parish ; but comfortable means, for—

“A man he was to all the country *dear*,
Contented, drew six hundred pounds a year.”

A little higher up on the Green lived the surgeon, considered one of the most important men in the village, keeping up an establishment of two or three servants, and the like number of horses ; the horses were used for the saddle, for the purpose of visiting patients not accessible to wheel and axle, or occasionally to witness the throw-off at a fox-hunt. He was considered a good practitioner, and enjoyed, as all such do in the country, the title of “Doctor.” He was a wise physician, too, for, on coming to the village, and before embarking in the business, he took the census of all the married couples, as well as those who were about to marry, from which he was enabled to draw conclusions as to the number of little strangers he should assist into this sublunary scene, and thereby ensure a regular and independent income ;—independent, we say, as all right-constituted fathers are only too

happy to pay for the introduction of these little household treasures, and never wait for the bill to be made out, but slip the fee into the doctor's hand as he descends the stairs ; therefore this might be considered an independent, ready-money branch of the business. I believe he did not consider the subject of popular education in a favourable view, being constantly in the habit of quoting the lines from Pope :—

“A little learning is a dangerous thing.”

In what way dangerous, I am at a loss to know ; having never heard that the physician's and surgeon's art flourished most in the soil of ignorance ; one loaf is better than no bread ; and for a man to be able to read only, is far better than for the same to be ignorant of this useful, entertaining art. A few doors beyond, stood a little thatched cottage, surrounded with deep-dyed bleeding-hearts, double-stocks, and wallflowers, out of which peered a board, inscribed with a red-hot poker on its paintless face, the words, “Sarah Knight, Midwife, etc. etc.” ; what the etc. etc. meant I leave the reader to conjecture ; but the first part proved to a demonstration that this really was a little colony where the human family flourished, and increased perhaps, even according to Mr. Meadows's declaration. But Mrs.

Knight differed materially from some of her sisters of Egyptian notoriety ; she acknowledged no restrictions, for she was said to be fortunate in her little undertakings ; consequently, before one month was ended she was in full engagement for another little affair, which should the same happen before expected, she had a daughter, whom she left with the first in order to pay more important attention to the second ; indeed, Mrs. Knight and Co. were perhaps the most important personages in the village : and so she thought ; for what would a village be without children, and how could there be children without a monthly nuss or a midwife ? Indeed, Mrs. Knight looked upon all the large families as her own ; she kept the whole of them under her maternal supervision ; and as the nursemaid passed her door with one of the little lambs in her arms, "That's one of mine," she would say to a lady customer, "and as fine a babe as ever was born, and about the finest I ever brought into this world."

But Mrs. Knight did not, like most in her calling, fancy gin. No, gin-drinking and snuff-taking she condemned *in toto*, as dreadful bad habits for a monthly nuss. "No, gin," she observed, "is too relaxing a deal for folk stopping up at nights ; give me a little rum, or brandy if you

like, for that doesn't pison a body, but nourishes and braces the whole frame ; and if a monthly nuss must have bacca," she repeated, "let them have a pipe, and smoke it, as I do, and not nose it in that dirty witch-like style, as some of um do."

So Mrs. Knight smoked the pipe of peace with the husband below, whilst all was progressing actively above. A little further, and they came upon the residence of the Queen's representative, sent forth for the purpose of securing the revenue from this and the surrounding villages, and to whom the Government had, by a very blind policy, given as small recompense as possible, in order, one would imagine, as an experiment to prove how far honesty could be strained in the face of poverty, and the individual kept free from corruption by his surrounding traders, on mere mechanics' pay. This man, with a wife and family, was expected to subsist, to be well mounted, and ride whip and spur immediately wherever duty called for the safety of the revenue. O ye purveyors of the nation's bounty ! whilst millions are spent in vain experiments, ending too frequently in failure, and worse than useless ! think of those who, in far-distant villages, represent the Government, and protect the revenue, and let them not be pointed at as the

poorest of the poor ; and yet these are the men that secure that which is so freely bestowed upon others.

Onward, and they came to the grocer's shop, through the diamond-paned windows of which shone pleasing images to juvenile minds of sweets, buns, marbles, and tops ; over the door of which was a very insignificant signboard, inscribed, without any regard to right orthography, "Tee, Coffe, Toboco, and Snuf sold here, by Licence." Here, thought Bob, is an evidence of the absence of the very rudiments of education, standing out, unblushingly contradicting our English lexicon. But they passed on, his friend Meadows ever and anon directing him to some (to him) interesting surrounding association in his native village, of which he stood forth as a patriarch, having never changed nor wished to change his place, having, as he remarked, been born and bred there, and please God, there would wish to die.

And now they arrived at the carpenter and wheelwright's shop, standing next the smithy, the doors of which, as usual, being daubed with varied coloured paints ; the carpenter too, as his sign expressed, was also the sexton and clerk, to which he modestly added, undertaker and coffin-maker. The walls of the smithy resounded as they passed with the usual dub-a-dub, tink, and the sparks .

were flying in fiery showers as the athletic vulcans powerfully belaboured the reeking metal. The owner of the smithy, too, designated himself cow- and horse-leech as well as blacksmith, and in his medical wisdom insisted upon bleeding all the young cattle in the spring, in order to counteract the influence of murrain, which practice he declared to be the best specific and antidote for or against that most serious disease ; the only reason he could give, however, for robbing the young animals of their life-blood being that his father did it before him, and his father before that,—and this was the extent of his argument in favour of this killing practice. But the error committed in such ignorance is self-evident, for here was taking from the young the principles of fatness and strength, rendering them by the mistake weak and impoverished, and the less able to resist disease, by robbing them in their health of that blood ; which is the life thereof.

Just beyond this shop was the shoemaker's, with its circle of philosophic, political cordwainers, renowned as the best sons of Crispin for improving the understanding throughout that and many parishes ; and beyond this the tailor's, where Giles got himself sewn up at Whitsuntide in regular country fashion.

Religion, to all appearances, in the village was not of spontaneous growth ; the old church-tower being fast crumbling to decay, without showing that any benevolent hand had been stretched forth to arrest the inroads old Time was making upon his devotee. There, likewise, stood a chapel, or meeting-house, looking like the temple of the Most High never should look, *viz.* very old, very dirty, very neglected.

But at last they arrived at the residence of Mr. Meadows, which proved to be an old-fashioned, modernized building, of no particular order or style, over a portion of which the ivy crept in wild luxuriance. The original walls were thick and massive, bearing somewhat the appearance of a portion of an old abbey ; but our friend Meadows, as his family increased, had increased his habitation likewise, by building a piece of new brick-work on to the same, which gave the building a rather grotesque appearance. There was much difference, however, in the appearance of the original and modern ; the antique still standing up, noble and solid, defying the elements and time to demolish ; and as you looked upon it, you fancied you heard the ancient smilingly addressing his young, consumptive, stuccoed friend thus : — “ Come near me, my delicate friend, come under the protection of my warm, offensive shoulder,

and I will protect you from your numerous enemies." This composition was called the "Priory."

Well, they entered the Priory ; when the master was speedily introduced to Mrs. Meadows and all the little Meadows, from Primus up to Septimus. For a time this interesting seven looked at him, perhaps much in the same manner they would at a lion, bear, or a giant, or any other animal, human being or monster, they had heard nursery tales respecting ; but children are physiognomists, and on Bob's countenance relaxing they felt immediately encouraged. Reader, that was an unfortunate relaxation Bob's muscles indulged in that moment, for in a few minutes they were all over him, crawling over his feet, over his knees ; his chair ; much in the same manner as the Lilliputians over Gulliver. What a position he felt in, to be sure ; how warm he got !

"Get down off the gentleman !" said the father. No effect.

"Get down, Primus," demanded the mother. The same result.

Ever and anon he cast his eyes down at his London suit, obtained with much difficulty, and felt in horrors when he observed one or two of the smaller members indulging in sugar-stick

and lozenges their sire had brought from London for them. But on they travelled, inspecting every portion of his person, and remarking on every novelty they observed in his hair, face, or clothes. He became again warm, hot, cold, warm again. "But I am under supervision," thought he. "I see this man fancies he governs with what he calls kindness. I must be patient. I must govern by sweet voice and countenance also, but, alas ! the young dolts will not take the hint."

Presently Septimus shouts out, "My ! hasn't he got a smeller !"

"Yes," says Primus, "and look at his eyes ; my ! ain't they sharp, they'll look through a gate-post nearly ; won't he find us out, as father says ; and my ! look at his hand, won't he whack us ! Well, I won't go to school, that I won't."

But now the father, thinking they were at last becoming too troublesome, which indeed they had become some time ere this, insisted upon their taking their departure, when a great storm arose between the elder and younger.

"I won't go to bed, I won't," said the amiable juveniles. "I allis stops up when there's company, I do."

Slap, dash, bang, and a scream ; and the room is cleared ; all is quiet ; and Bob relieved from his oppressors, Mr. Meadows standing up con-

queror of the position, and Bob enjoying as delicious a repose as ever did the victimized ox when having escaped the poisonous, tormenting gadfly.

Now, reader, be it known unto you, Bob loved children,—well-behaved children, obedient children,—but he could say, with due respect even to these little olive-branches, “a place for everything, and everything in its place.”

Now, the modern schoolmaster is supposed to be the very paragon of good temper; he is expected to contend all day with children exhibiting a hundred opposing dispositions, and too often with the tempers of the parents into the bargain, who love to interfere in school routine; to teach every day in the week, and not unfrequently on the Sunday likewise, and too often eking out, and living upon the smallest pittance; yet he must be a good-tempered man, and if punishment is to be awarded, he must do it as coolly as if eating his dinner. Such a man would, indeed, be a novelty in God’s creation. We have seen such a supposed person commence in this way:—he has coolly told the delinquent that the punishment he was about to inflict was for his especial good, and how sorry he was to appeal to such means for to obtain such ends,—not a word of which the boy believed. We have

seen such commence as frigid as the north pole ; but the sequel widely different. A few expressions of disapprobation from the victim, and the same cool person has become torrid as the equator.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Sleeping necropolis, enclosure of the past!
Home of the dead, and rank-fed grass!
I see, with iron pen cut in the rock,
An index to the past and present flock.

Original.

THE master and Mr. Meadows attended the place of meeting of the gentlemen who were intent on winding up the school, and putting an end to its operations at one fell swoop.

“Well,” commenced the chairman, as they entered, “we have just decided on giving the youngsters a long holiday.”

“Yes—ah—indeed,” replied Mr. Meadows, “but I intend otherwise;” and he was going to say much more, but unfortunately a choking sensation seized him, and therefore the world remains minus of what he intended advancing in the cause of education. This was a disadvantage Mr. Meadows suffered, viz., that when he in-

tended being most eloquent, and most commanding, his tongue grew thick, and refused to obey, only in little detached sentences. This want of command of speech Mr. Meadows attributed to not having studied elocution when young.

After the unexpected turn in their arrangements, the gentlemen looked inquiringly at each other with an expression of amazement depicted on their countenances, and at once determined on not leaving Mr. Meadows alone in his glory.

"Laws bless us!" said one, "the whole undertaking don't cost, after all, much more than one of my hunters."

"No," said another; "and when we are all together in the matter, it is a mere fleabite compared with other things we carry on."

So, through the determination of Mr. Meadows, the institution was retained, and placed on a better footing than ever.

On the next Monday morning the master entered the school, in order to take charge of his first flock of young admirers. He designated them such, having observed one and all deeply contemplating him as he stood before them, anxiously waiting to hear him speak, wondering, doubtless, whether the voice of the new master would argue feebleness or determination, weakness or strength, kindness or severity. "What

an admixture of countenances sits before me!" thought the master; "not any two alike. As the shepherd knows his sheep by their various faces, so shall I my school. Not two sheep alike, not two boys alike."

And now the master having brought his small stock of phrenology and physiognomy to bear upon his charge, in one could be read vigilance and industry; in another dogged determination and courage; in another weakness and indecision; in another self-esteem and pride; in another intellectual development and rare ability, marked in the width of forehead and sharp, intellectual eye.

"Here you are," thought the master, "with different dispositions, different amounts of intellectual ability, and with anything but good characters. Here will be a conquest, a field of glory, if the idle and disobedient be rendered industrious and attentive, the over-rash and vehement thoughtful and discreet, the weak and timid clever and active, and equal to meet the requirements of the world. The schoolmaster has a promising field for cultivation. It might, indeed, almost be considered a virgin soil he has to cultivate. The minister may preach; he may reason and argue in order to reach and penetrate the adult mind, but here he suffers a disadvantage.

He is labouring on a confirmed soil. But the mind of childhood is not yet sealed, but remains open to receive impressions, whether good or evil just depends upon the position it falls into. If good seed be not sown, weeds, noxious weeds will spring up in the ever-ready, retentive soil. Away, then, with jails, ignore the education of the prison for young offenders. To the jail and from the jail they will return, as the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. The jail will not teach self-respect; but on the contrary, self-neglect. When shall we be wise, and, instead of attempting to cure the effect, prevent the cause? Punishments too often prove a mistake; even the gallows proves this to a demonstration. Place the cap, swing the victim, have an eye for an eye, and tooth for tooth, blood for blood; give it as a lesson in morality to the crowd of hard-hearted ones glorying in the pluck of the wretched victim, and the next assize, it is probable, will see one or more of the hardened multitude arraigned before it. The supposed lesson of the hangman has proved a failure; it has not produced the desired effect, viz. the prevention of crime. Read the newspapers. Were there ever so many hanged? Were there ever so many to be hanged, as in this day of boasted Christianity? How is this? Has not the mur-

derer swung and hung his hour, as a scarecrow to intimidate the rest ? Alas ! he has. It is high time the principles of this education were studied by our rulers. Capital punishment was followed in the reign of the Georges to deter sheep- and horse-stealers, forgers, and house-breakers. Are there more or less of these crimes now that capital punishment is thought unnecessary to deter such criminals, and prevent such crimes, are questions worth consideration. The Law says, "He who sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." But we are not under the thunderings of the Law ; but under the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Gospel of Christ knows no revenge ; but forgiveness. The Law proclaims the murderer unfit to live ; the Gospel inquires, is he fit to die ? But to return : proper education will do much in preventing juvenile and adult crime. Go on, then, ye philanthropists ; ye patriots ! be not dismayed. Your march is in the right direction, for "if the soul be without knowledge, it is not good."

The school progressed ; daily increasing, and embracing in its benevolent arms the surrounding rising and otherwise neglected population. And the committee, too, frequently met, and decided on the best means of promoting the welfare of the institution.

"I am glad," said one of the farmers, "that I am, that it wasn't given up at the time we thought of doing so. Why, there's George, my ploughboy, goes there when I can spare him, and bothered if he can't read almost like a pa'-son ; I like to hear him mightily ; and he can tell you all about 'Merica, and the rest on't. Bothered if the chap hasn't a bit of a head for learning, and I shall put'n on as much as I can. But bothered if the school hadn't a narrow escape though, and we must thank neighbour Meadows for its existence now."

But what a blessing is education ! As it spreads through the parish how its superior influence must be felt by the people ! Now Giles, once as ignorant nearly as the horse he drove, can in some degree form an idea of countries beyond his own, and read and write,—blessings his father and grandfather never knew. Man, we must remember, has been sent into the world with two books to read, the book of creation, and the book of revelation, but being untaught, both are alike sealed to him. What a loss, then, does he suffer ! What sources of happiness and delight as an intellectual being is he denied ! What Christian, what benevolent individual, would not pity such a state, and long for the time when education should be universally spread through

the length and breadth of the land to illumine the dark places of our earth ?

In entering a town or village, it was the master's usual custom and practice to visit the church and graveyard. There is something very interesting in the consideration of the old grey pile, which has stood for centuries the battle and the breeze, and has seen nations rise and crumble,—famine, war, pestilence ; since there it took up its formal position, a quiet sentry of the passing scene.

The churchyard, likewise, is no less interesting than the church itself. Here on the tombstones, we have not only the commemoration of the dead, but an index to the living likewise, written with an iron pen in the rock ; for here, blended together, are the ashes of the yeoman, farmer, tradesman, servant ; not unfrequently with an epitome of their antecedents over their heads. Here you have a sleeping necropolis, with living inscriptions. Here Bob discovered the tomb of his friend Meadows's father, described as a yeoman of no ordinary merit in the parish, and much more, going to his credit ; so that, even regarding the caution in the proverb with respect to epitaphs, yet, even then, enough could be inferred that Mr. Meadows deceased was without doubt much respected in

the parish, and therefore Bob's friend came of a tolerable good stock.

But the country burying-ground differs widely from the fashionable town cemetery ; where you have a beautiful array of choice shrubs and flowers, splendid polished granite, and marble mausoleums, with their inscriptions and fashionable epitaphs, crucifixes, and other superstitious emblems, that, really, were the Reformers to rise from their graves and revisit the glimpses of the moon, and pass through a modern necropolis, they would be disposed to believe that the nation had again relapsed into Popish idolatry ; and would wonder, after the bloody scenes it fought through, that such should be the case. But so it is. There really is the resemblance, and it is better to keep even from the appearance of evil.

After some short time two or three intellectual friends resolved upon establishing a Mental Improvement Society in the parish, and in due time partially succeeded. The lectures consisted generally of subjects considered interesting and instructive to agriculturists, as chemistry, botany, and natural philosophy in general. A few opponents, however, sprang up, who designated the evening meetings "Chartist meetings," and almost wished, for aught I know, for the dark days

of the Norman William to extinguish the light at the sound of the curfew bell; but, of course, they were wrong, as the rules strictly prohibited either political or religious subjects being discussed, which, when some of them had really discovered, permitted themselves to be led over to join the "new light;" but others still remained in mental darkness as to whether the nine points of the Charter were not the principal subjects of consideration, at these to them mysterious meetings.

But many were anxious for more knowledge on various subjects, and rode many miles through dark and dreary roads for the purpose of learning more of the nature of grasses, the various properties of manures, and the composition of air and water, declaring themselves more intelligent on the various points than ever they had been before, and that the evenings spent in this way were some of the happiest in their lives.

Sometimes, however, a ridiculous remark or two would be advanced by one or two loquacious elderly gentlemen, who were frequently so headified, that at times they became completely subdued by Morpheus, who not unfrequently drew them into a profound snore, when a kind neighbour would gently hint to them of the possibility of their disturbing the lecturer, on which they

would wake up, rub their eyes, determined on not falling off their guard any more; but in a few moments off they were again in full snore, probably dreaming of—

“Flocks and herds,
Rats and birds.”

On one occasion a gentleman gave for his subject “pneumatics.” “What!” said an elderly farmer, “new mattocks?” “No, no,” said his friend, “air; wind, wind, you know.”

“Well, to be sure,” he replied, “’pon my life, now, I thought they were going to describe a new mattock for digging up potatoes we’; I did, now.”

On another occasion a gentleman was endeavouring to explain “inertia of motion,” when “That’s true, that’s true,” broke forth one of the farmers; “that I can swear, for one day—night—however, I was riding at a sharp trot, when something jumped out of the hedge; my rider stopped bang, but I wer’n’t going to stop, for I went slap over his head.”

“A capital illustration, indeed,” said the good-natured lecturer; “a real practical solution of our theory.”

Now, in country places the public schoolmaster is subject to many petty annoyances from parents and others, who have a great desire to control

the discipline of the school. Some complaining of their boys being made to learn so many lessons, when John So-and-so didn't learn nearly so many. Others, again, complained that their sons were not put forward, when at the same time neighbour Jones's son had advanced to the first class. In vain you told them their children had not the same ability as the latter; they could not see it. What parents can?

The schoolmaster's greatest annoyance, however, arose perhaps from two eccentric men, fast getting in years, and not at all partial to boys. It having been some time since they belonged to the class, they had lost much of the natural sympathy for little men they might originally have possessed; consequently perpetual hostility was kept up between the juveniles and their seniors, which frequently involved Bob in disputes between the parties, for the boys when out of sight were fond of teasing the old men, in order to bring forth their eccentricities, which they, on their part, were far too liberal in bestowing.

The first of these passed by the name of Massy. Now Massy had been drummer and fifer in the Royal Marines, and prided himself, in no small degree, on his travelling experience; and possessing a sprinkling of self-esteem and vanity, with more than a dash of conceit, made him not always

an object of respect in his village. He was very fond whenever an opportunity occurred of drawing forth his small stock of French and other European words, picked up by him in his various voyages and travels; and nothing gratified him more than to nonplus his neighbours by his peculiar answers, in his badly pronounced importations.

Massy, in this respect, resembled much Byron's Spanish blue, of whom he writes,—

“ She knew the Latin—that is, the Lord’s Prayer ;
And Greek—the alphabet, I am nearly sure.
She read some French romances here and there,
Although her mode of speaking was not pure.
For native Spanish she had no great care,
At least her conversation was obscure.”

So Massy, bidding defiance to all rules of grammar and pronunciation, passed for one that could talk French, and a really very clever person; which pleased him exceedingly, and gave him the greatest satisfaction, as he ejaculated the interjections, Yah ! yah ! yah ! which he invariably did, after producing, to him, a clever speech or wise expression.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Loud fell the gate against the post,
Her head-strings like to crack ;
For much she fear'd the grisly ghost
Would leap upon her back."

Bloomfield.

BUT Massy was an active, energetic man, not subject to *ennui* from want of occupation, being carpenter, mason, gardener, and tailor, all in turn. But his usual business, and that by which he principally obtained his living, was by following the handicraft of basket-making. His old dame, too (who fell in love with him as Desdemona did with the Moor, viz. for his long voyages, travels, and hair-breadth escapes), possessed, or was in receipt of a small annuity of £20, so that Massy and his better half were tolerably well off for persons in their position in life.

But although Massy had long given up pipe-clay and lace, and left the din of battle for the

olive branch of peace, he could not quite give up his predilection for the life he had so well followed in youth and manhood..

Thus, his cottage, of his own design and construction, resembled as much as a house could resemble, both in its exterior and interior construction, a seagoing ship ; the tiles, walls, doors, and shutters (with closed-in windows, much resembling ports), were all tarred, as, he remarked, he was fond of tar. It was cheaper than paint, any day ; and not only preserved the various parts of the building, but produced, when the sun shone on it, a healthy invigorating perfume, good to ward off distempers and infection of every kind ; yah ! yah ! yah ! His garden, too, was ornamented with marine specimens of rock, shells, and sea-weed, which altogether tended, in no small degree, to keep lively reminiscences in view of the time when the ocean was his home. In one corner of the same, too, he had with his own hands dug a well, and covered, and closed it in with a door, in order to keep out the frogs—French yellows, as he termed them. His garden likewise was well supplied with berry-bearing bushes, of the most choice quality and taste ; and at the gable end of his cottage was erected a piece of old mast, on which turned and swung a vane or weathercock, as every day he was

very particular to observe where the wind stood.

The inside of his cottage, as before remarked, also had, in no small degree, the appearance of a ship's cabin ; the walls being adorned with prints of sea-fights, and other battle-pieces ; and from the ceiling of which hung his hammock, a luxury he had never parted from since leaving the abode of Neptune.

Now, as before observed, these little peculiarities and eccentricities had often caught the eyes and attention of those active creatures designated "boys," some of whom had a wicked inclination for possessing some favourite apples belonging to Massy, and which likewise grew in the before-mentioned garden.

It was in consequence of this predilection that the master first made the acquaintance of Massy, for, in order to defend himself from their periodical depredations, he had fixed an old rusty bayonet on a pole, for the purpose of charging all unlawful comers ; and one day, after being some time on guard, he caught one, and wounded him, as he expressed it, in his stern. "The young pirate," said he, "having managed to get his bows clean through the hole, received the charge in his stern, not expecting to meet the guards in the trenches. Yah ! yah ! yah !"

"What is it, Massy?" inquired the master, after receiving this peculiar description of his encounter; "what is it?" said he.

"Why, some of your young rogues, the pirates! have broken through the barricades, after my rosy-cheeked susans, and I just gave one of the young thieves the first point. Yah! yah! yah!"

"And you really think he was one of this school?" inquired the master.

"Yes," he replied, "not the least doubt in the world about it; and if you don't know which, you will soon, I fancy; but I am not much afraid of another *sortie* from him again."

The boy was soon discovered suffering from this summary punishment of Massy; but it happened to fall in the right direction, as the father, poor, but sensible, took the practical lesson in good part, declaring he was glad his son had been so dealt with, and hoped the same would occur whenever he attempted the like practice.

Now, Massy, in consequence of having been a portion of the army of occupation in France, had no small amount of French vehemence and gesticulation (as well as French words, as before observed) when in the act of delivering any exciting account; this, again, was not at all lost on the mimicking juveniles, who were constantly practising the same; and this, coupled with an

every-day shouting of the word "weathercock," if they saw him digging in his garden, on which, feeling annoyed, he would down spade and run after them, declaring if he caught them he would have them one and all up to the gangway, and administer two dozen with the cat-o'-nine-tails. This word "weathercock" might have originated with the vane at his gable-end, or it might have originated with a peculiar jerking and turning motion which Massy had when following the exercise of walking; or it might have originated from a constant plan of turning or changing from church to chapel, or *vice versâ*, as the fit took him; but, however, one morning Massy called again at the schoolhouse with another complaint. "Those boys of yours," said he, "have been up to their devil's games again."

"What? what?" inquired the master.

"Why, they ran off with my weathercock last night; and you ought to give the young sea-robbers two dozen each."

"How do you know, Massy," inquired the master again, "that they were our boys?"

"How do I know? yah! yah! yah! don't nearly the whole breed belong to you in the parish; I am nearly certain it was the boys of your school."

"Yes," replied the master; "but before you

can witness against, and before I can become judge and executioner, you must not be only nearly, but altogether sure. I am sorry, Massy, you should have been annoyed," continued he, "but certainly I am not responsible for the whole parish."

"Well," said he, "I should like to see them all brought up to the gangway, and have two dozen each from the pussy cat with nine tails, the rogues! There, I have travelled through Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, yet have I never seen such an ignorant set; they don't comprehend anything, not even my weathercock; the fools don't understand that it is to prove the wind and, consequently, the weather to be expected; there they go on, pig-headed, often getting their hay and corn spoiled, because they won't consult the necessary weather-indicators. I tell you I will have them yet," he continued. "Yah! yah! yah! let them only come within reach of my bayonet, and they shall taste cold steel, and no mistake, the young imps!"

Massy, too, like most men whose occupation had been on the mighty deep, was superstitious to a degree; he believed in the whole category of fairies, elfs, witches, ghosts, ghouls, and shades; and all other spirits, of whatever shape or wher-ever found. He particularly believed in witches,

the existence of whom he proved by referring to the Biblical witch of Endor ; he, in fact, delighted to ponder over the vagaries of the supernatural ; to him it was a sort of comfortable contemplation, out of which he would not allow any person to reason him. It was his faith, and it was to him a pleasing illusion, to fancy this world to be full of the supernatural ; his was a peculiarly superstitious mind ; he loved a good ghost story, and a particularly favourite book of his was, ‘Glimpses into the Supernatural ;’ he believed there were some visible to the human eye, some of importance to the wayfarer ; some to be cherished, others to be avoided ; some exceedingly wicked, others more comfortable demons ; in fact, he was a determined apostle of the invisible. “For,” said he to Bob one day, “I have seen them, I have seen them ; yah ! yah ! yah !”

“And what have you seen, Massy ?” inquired the master.

“What have I seen ? why, now, I’ll just tell you what happened only a few nights ago—only last Saturday it was ; I was crossing Goodman’s Close at about ten o’clock, P.M. ; night quite dark, with the exception of a little glimmer from the stars ; wind due west, and misty. Immediately I jumped off the stile into the field, I saw and heard the sheep make a tremendous rush ;

the whole flock, dreadfully alarmed, ran for their very lives ; and immediately upon it, I saw a thing rise off the ground, (with four legs, and black as night in appearance,) and cut through the air like lightning ; it appeared about the size of a donkey, and I saw real sparks of fire fall from its nostrils."

" And what do you suppose it was, Massy ? " inquired the master again.

" Well, now, that was an evil demon, frightening the poor harmless sheep first, and me after ; but powerless, powerless, all power taken away."

" Well, now, Massy ; really," replied Bob, " if you would allow me, I think I could explain the whole mystery on natural hypothesis, without appealing to the supernatural at all."

" No," said Massy, " no ; you might just as well try to reason me out of name as that, or endeavour to make me believe black is white ; it can't be done, Sir, it can't be done."

" Now, let me see ; ten o'clock at night, you say ; dark and misty ; and you saw an animal resembling a donkey gallop off through the atmosphere. All this appears to me to have been an optic delusion. The sheep, poor things, were terrified, true enough ; but you were the object of their terror ; your quick descent into their

pasture at that, to them, untimely hour, when reposing or in deep sleep, was quite sufficient to alarm the fleecy people. You alarmed them ; they, in return, alarmed you ; to this you confess. The impression of the sheep, left on the retina of the eye, fright magnified into a donkey ; the sparks you fancied you saw were caused by the flashing of your own eyes as you jumped off the stile and descended the gully ; so the whole affair, I venture to say, Massy, was nothing more nor less than an optic delusion."

"Yes, that is all very fine," replied Massy ; "you can believe it if you will ; but I, never."

Now, as before remarked, Massy could not help feeling a little conceited and vain ; he could not forget the important services he had been engaged in for the State, in having constituted one of the army of occupation, and, afterwards, of having been one to assist in conveying the scourge of Europe to his island-home at St. Helena, which account he often related to his credulous neighbours, with the usual "Yah! yah! yah!" accompaniment attached as a period to the discourse ; all these little romances made him feel important in the village, for he felt himself the man who had travelled ; he likewise prided himself in using extreme phraseology, picked up in his wanderings ; for instance, one day his neigh-

bour Plod came to him, in order to get a little information respecting Australia, having an idea of emigrating to that distant colony.

"Well, neighbour Plod," commenced Massy, "you see I have been to that far-off continent, where they dig gold something in the same manner as you dig potatoes in this country. Much of the soil I believe to be fertile, and climate salubrious, but, notwithstanding, in some parts, rather obnoxious, I fancy, to the European constitution; that is, some portions of it."

"I wish," said Plod, "that Master Massy would be more plain with a poor fellow."

"Yes, yes; I see, I see," replied Massy; "yah! yah! yah! more decision and precision in my description of that magnificent far-off Antipodean continent, eh? Yah! yah! yah!"

"'Pon my word, Mr. Massy," said Plod, "again you have travelled too far for me, a deal."

"Think so? think so?" repeated Massy, quite delighted with having been able to nonplus his neighbour, and descending from his lofty phraseology, would commence, "Come here, come here;" and putting his mouth to Plod's ear, and his hand to convey the sound, would say Australia as "a first-rate place for poor folk; yah! yah! yah!"

We have been compelled to acknowledge too

that Massy was somewhat uncertain in his religious services, being quite a connoisseur of sermons ; so, after trying the church and all the chapels in the neighbourhood, would return home, and, wiping his spectacles, take his book, repeating, as he did so, in quite a dignified manner, "Old, old ; stale, stale ; nothing new, nothing fresh ; all the same." All this he repeated to his old dame, who looked upon him as quite an oracle and marvel of opinion on sermons and orthodoxical preaching. "The preachers," he repeated, "are all tame, poor tame things ! so I think I shall remain home, and study my Bible for myself." And so he would for a few Sundays, when again his funnel-mouthed clarionet would appear hanging over the church or chapel gallery, screaming out the Old Hundredth, until some little circumstance occurred to offend him, when off he would trot as before. So that, in fact, he did, in this respect, not a little favour the vane at the gable-end of his cottage. Now, Massy possessed also a most sublime view of the occupation of spirits after leaving this sublunary scene, and will present it to the reader as given by him.

"I am tired of it, I am tired of it," said he one day, after meeting a few unusual disappointments ; "I have seen all I want to see in

this little globe ; yah ! yah ! yah ! And now I want to be off to visit yon far-off worlds ; there are worlds up there. I want to conquer by sight ; the sun, the moon, and yon far-distant stars, but not too far for me. One day I shall reach them, one by one, every world beyond the sun ; I know I shall. I shall see more of the Great Father's creation. I shall flit from planet to planet, from star to star ; yes, like the other spirits, I shall read them closer, some time, I know I shall ; yah ! yah ! yah !” And Massy appeared as pleased as if he really had good grounds for his belief ; and perhaps he had. Who can contradict his theory ?

“ Massy, you are a problem I cannot solve,” thought the master. “ I will get you to give me your antecedents.” And here follows a portion of the same, for the benefit of the reader.

“ I was born,” he commenced, “ in the village S., in the county of G., and there it was I grew into a stout and active lad. I then left the scene of my boyhood, and joined my uncle, Captain of the ‘ Bristol Sally,’ as nice a little craft as ever stood to her moorings or swept before the wind. It was at the time that Bonnie, without any just cause or right, was carrying on his depredations all round, on the right-hand and left, spreading fire and sword over the whole con-

tinent of Europe, putting down one king, and setting up another. At last he contemplated a *coup de main* on our beloved island. Yah ! yah ! yah ! the fool ! His army on land and navy on sea were the terror of every one, and the paralysers of trade and commerce. We in the 'Bristol Sally' were bound to the West Indies with a cargo of British merchandise when we were unlucky enough to be captured by a French privateer, those sharks of a time of strife. My uncle possessed a large Newfoundland dog,—a treasure he was, poor fellow, to all on board. I shall never forget the dear fellow ; many is the life he had saved, the gallant creature. There was not a man on board, Sir, but would have given him his dinner any day rather than he should have gone without. When the wretches boarded us Nep flew at the officer in command and bit his sword in two. A fact, Sir, I assure you ; the metal flew at the pressure of ivory. Yes, that was a dog of noble daring, and no mistake ; he, Sir, never flinched at glittering steel ; the cannon's mouth was nought to him. How my uncle and crew begged his life ; but no, the demons left him to perish in the vacated, burning 'Bristol Sally.' Shall I ever forget the dear fellow's look, his imploring whine, as we took our departure ? Never. Oh ! that imploring look ! Do I forget, too, the scowl

on each man's countenance on that occasion ? Did we not swear to be revenged on such a nation as that ? Oh, War ! War ! thou cruel, hellish demon, rendering men fiends and devils in wanton cruelty. It was our good fortune, after spending some months in a French prison, to be exchanged for other prisoners ; and so, very soon we gladly returned home again. Old Bonnie was caged at Elba ; yah ! yah ! yah ! the rogue ! For a time there was a lull ; but the caged eagle gave them the slip, and war, with all its horrors, broke out again. England, land of my birth, flew to arms. How proud I was of my country ! Yah ! yah ! yah ! 'Down with the tyrant' was the cry from every English heart. Victory ! victory ! or Old England shall sink in the mighty conflict. Every heart throbbed with emotion, and stood prepared to die in the defence of the tight little island at home, or cross the seas, and meet the common enemy upon strange ground or water. The gentleman, the farmer, the shopkeeper, all donned the scarlet and pipeclay, and those who did not bore those who did upon their hearts with brotherly consideration ; and the preacher from the pulpit and the people in the pews called upon Almighty God to aid the cause of justice and humanity. Soldiers, Sir, were soldiers then, and no mistake ; the officers pur-

chased their commissions, and the privates enlisted for glory, and glory alone. Well, having been home some time, I found that the occupation of peace had no charms for me when all other young men were engaged in the activity of war. I enlisted in the Royal Marines, full of devotion and loyalty to my King and country. I felt proud I had entered the service, and felt the greatest opposition to the foe : yah ! yah ! yah ! But soon I discovered that this, like every other system (where men are called upon to manage many men of many minds, the ignoble as well as the noble), was full of imperfections. The manner adopted by some of the old martinets with respect to the young soldier was just that calculated to disgust and discourage him at the outset. I marched along, however, with the other fresh-caught youngsters, with the colours flying in our hats, and the sergeant blustering and spouting of the charms of a soldier's life, foreign countries, promotion and honour,—all of which I took as given; but some of them took it all in as gospel truth ; for how could such a fine man, in such a fine dress and gay plumes, be so mean as to lie ? Yah ! yah ! yah ! poor fools. Sir, I can truthfully say that on the day I enlisted it was with the most honourable and noble intentions to serve my King and country to the utmost of my power when the day of trial

should arrive ; but judge my disappointment when on arriving at the depot where I was to be manufactured into a bold and fearless soldier ! Here it appeared to me that all the wise heads had been put together for the purpose of intimidating, disgusting, and degrading the young aspirant for military fame ; instead of encouraging and maintaining in every respect that high courage so necessary to carry the soldier through his bold adventure in the day of battle. Everything appeared to me to have been done that could have been accomplished to destroy ardour, self-respect, and healthy ambition ; for the next morning after arriving at the depot we were marched into the barber's shop, and there they cut nearly the whole of our hair from our heads, the barbarous barber sneering the whole time, as if he enjoyed the fun of seeing us with a piece on the top of the crown about as broad as the palm of your hand. When I entered the barber's shop I gloried and prided myself in a good head of hair, but on looking at the glass, Oh, horrors ! I scarcely knew myself, I looked for all the world like an escaped convict. My temper rose within me. ' Well,' said I, ' when I entered the army I expected to be treated as an honourable man, but you have given me the appearance of a thief and a vagabond.' For this speech I was duly punished, which only served

to add fuel to fire. This was a fine commencement for one who had entered the army for glory ! Oh ! the blindness, at that time, of military rulers. Why did they not learn to treat men as men, and have in return the service of true men ? I hated soldiering from that moment ; I felt degraded ; I lost self-respect, for I was but a youth ; I own it, I became a very bad soldier. A few days after I had been in the cells I was brought out to hear the Mutiny Act read ; after which marched into an extensive building to witness the punishment of flogging, considered so necessary at that time for the British soldier. As we entered I observed the grim-looking triangles had been erected, before which stood the two prisoners in charge of their guards. There they stood, wearing the honourable colours of their country as men and soldiers, but about to be degraded to the level of brutes by a most revolting military punishment. I had heard that such a practice existed in our noble army, brave to a man ; but now I was about to witness the fact for myself. Being a recruit with others I had the privilege of being marched right up close to the triangles, that the lesson about to be conveyed by the drum-major might have a really salutary effect upon us youngsters, yah ! yah ! yah ! Presently the order was given, ‘ Attention ! fix bayonets,’ etc. Close to me stood the surgeon

in military uniform, the commanding officer, an orderly with a basin of water, and the drummers who were about to administer the castigation, in white jackets and with cats in their hands ; the drum-major, with his assistants, was busily engaged pinioning the culprits to the triangles. My heart sickened ; how I hated soldiering and all connected therewith, the commanding officer, surgeon, the monarch that knew, and permitted it, the country that upheld it,—all engaged in and allowed the same : that mean, degrading punishment known as military. The thwack, thwack, of the cat, however, roused me from my wicked reverie, and the determination by which the drummers brought down the merciless cat made my flesh creep upon my bones. At first the victim's back appeared red, then purple or liver-coloured, but still on the work of man's devastation goes ; when, rattle, rattle, a musket and bayonet fell before the rank or line ; the recruit who supported it, a strong, hardy youngster, had fallen himself, fainted from the sad sight, Nature refusing to witness the same any longer.

“ ‘ Carry him away,’ says the commanding officer. ‘ Carry him out.’ Rattle, rattle ; another has fallen ; sympathy for the flogged and fainting has caused another to succumb to his feelings.

“ ‘ Carry him away,’ is the order again. ‘ Let

them see a few more foggings, and they won't play the woman like this, I'll be bound,' said the sergeant, as he obeyed the order.

"But now the scene changes ; it is not the witnesses now, but the culprit, who is about to surrender his dogged will to his sufferings.

"'Water, bring some water,' cries the doctor, and feels his pulse ; and so they proceed until the supposed necessary lashes were delivered, in order to convince a soldier of his duty. Liberated from the triangles, one of them advanced toward the commanding officer. 'Thank you for that,' said he ; 'but you have not quite done me yet,' and off they were marched to the hospital, in order to be cured of the wounds inflicted on their tender flesh ; but still they had failed in breaking that determined spirit, which would tend, if properly managed, more than anything to carry its possessor through the battle-field. But this procedure was invented, one would suppose, for that purpose. Is not this what a soldier requires ? How unwise, then, to destroy the spring of his elasticity !

"Wisdom, wisdom, wise, wise, eh ? Yah ! yah ! yah !" ejaculated Massy.

"I did not faint," said he. "I never faint, Sir ; this relief, granted to some, was denied to me."

"This first lesson, however, had a sad effect on the recruits ; they remained silent and gloomy, forming in their own minds the resolution to desert on the first opportunity.

"Now, Sir," continued Massy, "I will just ask you as a common-sense man, if this was the way to manage the young soldier ? I will ask any one, if the means employed to secure obedience and discipline had not just the opposite effect to that which the wise-heads intended the same should have ; whether, in the place of creating fear and obedience, the means employed did not tend to discontent, hatred for the service, and sure desertion. It is high time, Sir, it is high time the country took this question up in order to save itself, not only good soldiers, but money likewise. I say, let the few off, and not demoralize the whole by the exhibition of crime. And its punishment. This never destroys vice and crime, but, on the contrary, increases the same. I am an old man now, Sir, and passed a long time in the army. But I was never flogged ; but I say, do away with this abomination in the brave British army, and treat the soldier as a man, and you shall have man's service ; treat him as a brute, and you shall know how brutal he will become ; encourage him by promotion and pay ; give in the time of war mechanics' wages, if necessary.

Surely the man who saves your country ought to be remunerated equal to the one who builds your garden wall to keep the enemy out. Do this, and plenty of Britain's noble sons shall be found to uphold the honour of Old England, when her enemies shall come in like a flood, to attempt to sweep her from her moorings. Away with the idea of mercenary troops,—foreign legions, indeed, brought together at double the expense, and are not worse than they might be expected, from men not fighting for honour, nor any other powerful motive, but simply for the mercenary shilling. But now, Sir, let me away from the triangles, and everything connected with the same, for they are black reminiscences in my military experience. I went through the long war, was in several engagements, was a long time in France, in the army of occupation, went with Bonnie to St. Helena, returned home, bought my discharge, got married ; yah ! yah ! yah ! came here, opened the basket-making. And here I hope to die, d.v., and then away, away, yah ! yah ! yah ! to other worlds. The ship, Sir, is my own, and the ground likewise on which it stands ; but I find myself like an old barque, getting leaky. But I am trusting to the great Captain to steer me safe into the harbour of refuge, and moor me fast in the happy haven.”

This, then, was a short epitome of Massy's life. One portion—that of his military experience—seems to be a warning to ardent youth, burning with military ardour. Unfortunately, now as then, much of it is too true. It is certain a man may enter the service, and never be degraded by flogging; but still, as the punishment exists by a slight offence in a moment of unrestrained temper, an angry answer to a superior might be construed into an offence deserving this degradation. And for the glory of the British army, our sons, our brothers, let us compel by voice, by our representatives in Parliament, and by every legitimate means, to sweep for ever from the British service this demoralizing disgrace,—the great enemy of the British army and navy,—preventing the high-minded, high-spirited, and the best mettle of the country from joining the ranks. Let us remember that the step which tends most to ennoble our troops and give them self-respect is the same that ensures victory. The soldiers who understand self-respect will be the ones on whom to rely when comes the tug of war. We don't want men like the flogged Russian serfs,—flogged on to sure defeat. We don't want so much matter as mind.

Let the British army and navy be ennnobled, and not degraded. The police are not flogged,

the volunteers are not flogged, the French soldier is not flogged, the officers are not subject to the cat. Destroy the curse of flogging, and the character of the same shall be more than ever “Irresistible,” “Invincible.”*

* In justice, it must be here remarked that, since Massy's military experience, great improvements have taken and are still taking place in the British army; may such continue, until the ranks shall not depend upon any waif or stray, but prove inviting to England's best and most respectable sons!—taught to look upon the standard as a most noble and honourable profession.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"And sometimes lurk I in a gossip's bowl,
In very likeness of a roasted crab."

Shakespeare.

THE master's other eccentric friend was, in many respects, the direct opposite to Massy. Massy had travelled and rolled much in his life, but Billy Wilks, as we shall call him, never travelled more than a few miles from his natal homestead, where his father, grandfather, and 'other antecedents had resided before him. But seldom did the eccentrics meet but they repelled each other, and parted in an unbecoming, captious manner, for Billy Wilks would never condescend to stretch his credulity to believe all the, as he designated them, "them long-drawn" yarns of rolling Massy. It may do for the marines, he would say, but not for Billy Wilks, who wasn't born yesterday, nor to-day neither; and off would go

Massy with his interjections, “Yah! yah! yah!” on which Billy Wilks would turn round, look after him as he unlocked his cottage-door, and mutter, “Cracked, cracked; I know he is. As mad as a March hare, no doubt, the fellow is. I know he must be, for who ever heard of bread growing on trees, baked and all, I suppose? A likely story, indeed, to cram a body we’.” No, no! it won’t do; get up earlier, Mr. Massy. Then, again, cotton growing in balls, ready wound, I suppose. What next, I wonder? I suppose I must believe that the moon is made of green cheese. It won’t do, I say; it won’t do. I would as lief believe that abroad it rained pork-pies ready baked, with knife and fork to eat them we’.” And so saying, he would hobble into his cottage, ignoring everything advanced by Massy, curtailed or exaggerated, just simply because Massy was the author of the information; and so he would close his door, and with it his mind, against Massy’s intellectual teaching and extravagant ideas.

Billy Wilks had been married too, but his old dame had left this scene some years before the writer had the opportunity of knowing him, and it is reported that he mourned for her many days in his usual eccentric manner. The night after the poor lady died Billy measured her himself, and took the lineal dimensions to the carpenter the

next morning, observing, "Make a neat plain box, for she's gone, gone, all gone. Yes, all gone, poor thing! I miss her very much to-day. Make her as snug as possible," and Billy wiped away a tear with his sleeve. And so he followed her remains to their resting-place; and he being left, lived entirely alone, spending much of his time at the meeting-house, or in carrying out many little acts of charity.

Billy, also, like Massy, prided himself in being a good judge of doctrine. He understood orthodox from heterodox; and when one of the ministers loudly and warmly launched forth to his satisfaction, especially on the subject of free grace, Billy felt delighted; and he would slowly rise from his seat in the aisle (for no pew could confine him), slowly advance towards the pulpit, look the preacher full in the face, smiling with the greatest delight, utterly regardless of all around, and when the minister dwelt, as he often did, on the love of Christ to the worst of sinners, he would audibly respond, "That's it! that's it! you got it there! all right!"

"The drunkard can't enter heaven," says the minister.

"I should think not, indeed!" responded Billy.

"But it is their own fault. There is room

enough in heaven if he would leave off his sins for Christ's sake."

"I should think so, and plenty!" responded Wilks.

"You, perhaps, are a liar, a thief," said the minister. "Now it is expressly written, such cannot enter heaven."

"Can't see how they can expect to!" responded Billy.

"I say again, perhaps you have drunkards in the village?"

"Too many by half," responded Billy.

"Now this is a very bad policy," observed the minister.

"So say I," responded Wilks.

And so on through the whole service, until one Sunday his favourite minister was compelled to halt, when he commenced, "Dear friend, if you persist in going on in this manner, I really must give the pulpit up to you altogether, for I can't proceed;" after which the old gentleman remained mute for a short time, but presently broke forth again, as he always did if he liked the minister and his doctrine. But if the same dwelt on the more conservative principles of Calvinism, Billy would never rise from his seat. No smile lit up his aged countenance; but there he would sit, as solemn as a judge; in fact, Billy Wilks was considered a good

judge of the Christian religion, and a look in his direction was considered a good index how things were progressing, whether favourably or otherwise. His movements proved exceedingly interesting to the juveniles, who frequently attended more to see him than to hear the minister. But, although in many respects Wilks was good and to be respected, he possessed a troublesome, nagging temper, difficult and troublesome at times to manage, which caused him, like his neighbour Massy, to be at variance with boys, as in the Sunday-school he never allowed them to move their heads, or look off their books; and when out-of-doors he liked them to pass his cottage with stiff, mathematical precision, and had the greatest objection to their casting an eye or stone in the direction of the rooks cawing in the elms that hung over his residence.

So one day he came to the master in a decided pet, and commenced, "I say, I say, mister, I have got a very serious complaint to lodge against your boys. 'Pon my word, now, since this large school has been established in the village, there is no rest to be had. It really is almost unbearable."

"Well, Mr. Wilks, what have they been doing?" inquired the master; "say on. What have they been doing?" he repeated.

"Are they not always doing? Who ever saw one of the young Ishmaels when he was not doing, I should like to know? Any one would think you were born yesterday," said he in compliment to the pedagogue.

"But what is the complaint?"

"Well, now, you only just look here. No sooner are them boys out of this school than they are in the road, shouting and hollowing like mad. Couldn't you keep them in a little longer in the evenings sometimes? Yesterday five or six of the rogues together passed my cottage. I saw them coming, so thinks I, 'As sure as fate they will shout or throw stones to disturb my rooks nest-building. And there they were at it, true enough. One of the stones fell and broke one of the cottage tiles. I called after the young vagabonds, and away they went, like wickedness, as they are, shouting all the way in order to worry my rooks a-nest-building, as I said before. Really, there is no rest now."

"Well, Mr. Wilks," replied the master, "I see the charge you have made. Now are you sure they were the boys of this, and no other school, that threw the missiles at your rooks? If so, I will speak to them on the subject presently, as I should feel sorry for any of them to annoy you. But now, Mr. Wilks," continued he, "don't you

candidly believe that the education of these poor boys to be of more importance than many rooks? I know you do. You own they are rough and wayward. You believe in the immortality of the soul, and it is said that if the soul be without knowledge, it is not good. I am sure you must see at once the reasonableness and duty to educate the poor and neglected; and I am sure you feel thankful that it has been placed in the minds of a few benevolent individuals to carry on this school."

"Yes, I see that now," said Mr. Wilks; "only I wish in my heart that the room was further away, so that the young rogues never passed my cottage."

"Yes, I see," answered the master. "Mr. Wilks, you want to live in a world full of human beings, and never expect to be shouldered by any one. Really, now, I think you want a world to yourself. Don't you think that here is a little selfishness that would be better eradicated?"

"Yes," replied Billy, "there is something in that, maybe. I'll think it over," and away he went.

But in a few days after came Mr. Wilks again, very excited and angry, and stating that a boy when he passed whistled between his fingers, and called out "Cuckoo! cuckoo!"

"Well, can you identify the boy?" said the master. "I will have them all in the desks, and you shall pick him out."

"Oh no, not at all, not for worlds. Do you think I am going to be a laughing-stock to the young infidels? No, not if I know it, I would rather not;" and off went friend Wilks in an instant, and the master saw him no more on the subject.

However, afterwards he discovered they were not his boys that broke the tile or whistled, but some strangers, not aware how jealously he watched the rooks, and who thought them an excellent mark.

So things went on ; many complaints to settle and judge. However the master determined on not imitating the man and his ass, but, on the contrary, following a steady, just course ; and the result was soon apparent. But it was not a little work with the old patriarchs, who considered it their peculiar prerogative to find fault with any new innovation into the parish.

One day Mr. Meadows called at the school, commencing, "I say, we have been thinking of having a little examination of the children. Got a few friends coming from town to hold forth a bit. And you see we want to get a better school-room, so if you will just write out a bill, we will

get them printed on market-day.” And so in the course of a fortnight the said meeting took place.

The speeches, on the whole, were to the point, as they alluded to the deadening influence of ignorance upon the soul, and the great advantages of education here and hereafter. The secretary read the report of the past year. He regretted, he said, that they had not been able to augment the master’s salary ; but as the schoolroom must be enlarged, that must be postponed at present ; but after the schoolroom has been built and paid for, the master must be thought of.

On looking round the meeting, Massy and Billy Wilks could be observed sitting upon the open forms, and not far from each other, attentively listening to the speakers ; when presently, as Billy warmed into the subject, he rose from his seat, and frequently responded in his usual way. When the speaker remarked, “ Childhood and youth are vanity,”

“ Quite true, quite true ; you got it there, and no mistake.”

“ ‘Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.’ ”

“ That’s it again !” responded Mr. Wilks.

"No doubt you have got some wild boys in the village,—some thorough Ishmaels."

"Quite right,—right again," said Mr. Wilks ; "too many by half."

"Then use the means to the end. Have a school and work it."

But when anything was advanced not exactly in accordance with the views of Mr. Wilks, he never rose from his seat, but sat silent and motionless.

Massy, too, was fast following the speakers, and was evidently becoming a convert to the principles of popular education. Frequently, and especially when the speakers alluded to ignorance being the foundation of all error at home and abroad, Massy's usual interjection, "Yah, yah, yah!" could be heard, although in a compressed and modified form.

But presently, to the astonishment of all, Mr. Wilks rose from his seat, and made his way to the platform, and asked permission to speak, and address the meeting a few minutes, being, as he remarked, a villager of long standing, to which application of course the gentlemen graciously consented. "By all means, by all means," said they, a smile at the same time lighting up the intellectual countenances of the younger members of the platform.

" Gentlemen and friends," commenced Mr. Wilks, " you will excuse a very old man presuming to take up an inch of your time on such an occasion as this, it may be last time I shall ever do so. I have much pleasure in hearing what you, gentlemen, have advanced to-night in the cause of popular education ; and on coming to this meeting I felt convinced this was a step in the right direction. I confess before you all, I didn't think so at first, when I remembered the number of boys that would be brought into the village to sport and play about at times. So long since I was one myself, I suppose, I have lost all sympathy for these active little men. But now I see better, and I am downright glad the friends persevered in the good cause." (Cheers.) " But you must excuse me, gentlemen, when I say my thinks you have commenced at the wrong end. Building rooms and getting in debt, and all that sort of thing, sounds mighty progressive, no doubt ; but what farmer would build waggons without first thinking of the horses to draw them, or merchant build a ship without thinking of the captain, and all the other first powers ? By your report to-night I find you stating that it is necessary the master's salary should be increased, yet you put it off in order to build a new schoolroom. Now that will not do.

Attend to the first moving power, and then to the rest afterwards. By not doing so you cripple the master's energies and paralyse his usefulness. You don't like that, perhaps; but I am a plain-spoken man, and as you have given me leave to speak, I'll speak right out." (Cheers.) "Now, gentlemen, I say speak as much as you like of building chapels, churches, and schoolrooms, but don't forget the officiating minister or master. No, that will never do.

"Now to-night, and you all know I am not rich, I propose during my life to give two pounds per annum to the master alone" (cheers), "and after I've done we't, and it won't be long first I reckon, I leave my cottage for the purpose of the residence of the master, with this consideration, that he shall protect the rooks, that have been there, they and their ancestors, many centuries." (Cheers.)

"Now, gentlemen and friends, I have done, I have had my say. Excuse an old man's infirmities, who means well, but often makes a mistake. I wish you all now a very good night." And Billy stepped down from the platform, and retired in the direction of Rookery Cottage, to the great astonishment of all.

The gentlemen felt in many respects very encouraged by the sayings and promises of the old

patriarch. Massy, too, shook hands with him at the door, and giving him a familiar slap on the shoulder, said, "Well done! Wilks for ever! Wilks, you are a trump! yah, yah, yah!"

When Massy returned home he told his old dame chapter and verse of the whole proceedings, at which she put up her hands and eyes, and exclaimed, "Massy, why wonders will never cease!"

"No, that they won't," said Massy; "for when we have done wondering here, we shall be in other worlds, and have other things to go on wondering at, yah! yah! yah!"

Now in small country places, where every one knows what his neighbour is about, as, for instance, how many horses he has bought, and how many sheep sold before rent-day, and all the other internal family affairs, it is no wonder that gossips abound.

This business is frequently carried on by ladies not otherwise engaged, still not entirely confined to that class; as not unfrequently some of the lords of the village loquaciously disposed indulge in this exercise, and descend to the business of newsmongers. The three most determined to keep the village under their particular supervision were the Misses Tagg and Fagg and a Mr. Bolt; the two first, of course, maiden ladies,

who, after receiving and refusing many offers of marriage, settled down in affluence, and passed much of their time *tête-à-tête*, either in relating the conquests they had made themselves, or anxiously undertaking their neighbours' business.

The latter personage, Mr. Bolt, was a bachelor, of some fifty summers, glorying in the universal drab and gilt buttons, the whole man crowned with a broad-brimmed Golgotha. He was known to be well off in the world, enjoying the patrimony that legally descended to him from his friends who roamed this sublunary scene before him. Mr. Bolt, too, in his way had courted more than one of the neighbouring fair; on which occasion, it is said, he put on a most condescending smile, and made a very profound obeisance to all the friends of the lady. But, having discovered at last, for he was a very suspicious and mean bachelor, that the young Eves, as he termed them, had to him a very unpleasant habit of casting their brilliant orbs beyond himself in the direction of Woodbine Cottage and its surrounding paddock and gardens; felt disappointed, and gave up the game altogether; at least he insinuated as much, although the report from the ladies was quite the contrary, viz. that they gave him up. At any rate Mr. Bolt congratulated himself upon his

escape, and considered himself a very happy, sensible man for not having entered the bands of wedlock; for being a very nervous person he constantly had visions of want before him,—himself coming to want, Mrs. Bolt to want, and, perhaps, the dear, helpless little Bolts to want. So Mr. Bolt discontinued his particular attentions, put on what covered the whole of his family, and walked off, and, not having made any particular impression on the heart or hearts of the lady or ladies, the damsels resigned his compliments, nothing more, with a becoming grace. "It is my property they want," said he, "not me; and then, perhaps, they wouldn't take care of it, and I should have the bitter experience of seeing my little melt away, like a snowball in a rapid thaw."

But in their turn the dear ladies were not a whit behind in publishing their views of Mr. Bolt's advances. "He is a sort of embarrassed man," said they; "when on the errand of courtship his tongue appears paralysed, and altogether he is a most peculiar person;" and one of the neglected ones declared that in a walk of three miles on a most beautiful invigorating warm day in summer, when the birds sang melodiously in the trees; when even the grasshopper's chirp was determined, and strong; and the very frogs croaked their best; Mr. Bolt never spoke but twice all the time. When

on leaving for the walk he observed, "I think we shall have rain," which never came; and on returning from the same remarked again, "I think it won't rain now." "A pretty courtship, indeed!" said she; "I would as soon have an African baboon or gorilla for my admirer :" so at once left him to his own deliberations, hoping "he would not get wet." Another lady with whom he was on familiar terms got rid of him much in the same way, as once, on a very hot Sunday in the month of June, he actually appeared at the house of his intended in a drab great-coat. "Oh my !" said the lady, " did I ever, no I never saw such in my life ; what in the world made you wear your great-coat such a warm day as this ? why all the folks will be laughing at you, and me too."

"Well, Ann,—well, Ann," replied Mr. Bolt, "I will just tell you ; I thought they wouldn't know me."

"Know you ? you coward,—you silly old man ! what are you ashamed of, I wonder ? Now, as you have come in your great-coat that you might escape being known, go back in it at once for the same purpose ;" so, giving a sarcastic and provoking smile, slammed the door in his face. On which Mr. Bolt beat a retreat as fast as possible, and never made the attempt again, declaring that the Fates objected to his marrying. However,

having recovered the shock, he joined the *corps de gossip* of Misses Tagg and Fagg, and in the business of newsmongering served in the capacity of jackal, or lion's provider, as he could enter dens and caves not accessible to the ladies, and bring to the light of day and open scrutiny information and intelligence that might in all probability have lain dormant for ever. But he was an indefatigable man of business; much of the coming and past events, however, he was assisted in discovering by the aid of his man Peter, and Nutkins the barber. "Nutkins," said Mr. Bolt, "is a very intelligent man; he knows the ins and outs, marriages, courtships, prosperities, and adversities of the whole village, of all the families, indeed, hereabouts, from Dan to Beersheba;" yet at the same time admitting that Nutkins was a good hand sometimes at addition and multiplication, therefore it was no wonder that news flourished in the shop of the barber. Mr. Bolt likewise obtained some of his information from the shoemaker's shop, where sat the worthy sons of Crispin improving and practising on the understandings of the village swains. "Clever sort of chaps they are," said Mr. Bolt; "know more than here and there one." The ladies likewise, before alluded to, of course were not at all at a loss or dull in this important business, calling upon dra-

per, grocer, milliner, Mrs. Knight, midwife, and last of all, their own charwoman, from whom a rather important budget would be obtained, which when brought home and compared with Mr. Bolt's notes, out of the *mélée* and data facts could be deduced and conclusions drawn of the proceedings in the village. Now, as might have been expected, the principal subject for speculation the next morning was the goings-on at the before-named meeting, more particularly that part which alluded to the sayings and doings of Billy Wilks. "I wonder if he has not some poor relations that would be glad of his guineas and Rookery Cottage," said one. "Charity, I say, should begin at home."

"Perhaps," said another, "he devoted Rookery Cottage as a passport, in a measure, from this to that." And so on, with many more ill-natured remarks issued at the doings of Mr. Wilks.

Miss Fagg in a great bustle called on Miss Tagg, and commencing, "Oh, my dear Miss Tagg, I have been dying to see you. I wanted to see you so very particularly to unbosom my mind. Do you know, I have just heard, oh! an extraordinary piece of intelligence indeed. Why, they say that last night at the school meeting that poor man Wilks promised two pounds per annum for the benefit of the master, and actually

promised Rookery Cottage for his especial use after his death. I never heard such a piece of folly in all my life. Why, hasn't he any poor relations somewhere he could benefit with his money? He said last night he had not. Why, I never heard of such a lucky person in my life; one without poor relations,—I don't believe such exists in the wide world. Only let Mr. Wilks advertise in the '*Times*' newspaper, and I'll be bound claimants would spring up like mushrooms in autumn."

"My dear Miss Fagg," replied Miss Tagg, "I am not at all astonished at what any man will do; I have been in the world long enough now to know there is no accounting for their eccentricities and wild extravagances. Wilks is getting old, perhaps childish, and these people have a wonderful way of getting over the simple and unstable. Besides, it might be Wilks considered it a step upwards; charity, charity and benevolence, you know, are fine things. But here comes Mr. Bolt; no doubt he will be able to explain all.—Is it really true, Mr. Bolt, that Wilks has made such a foolish proposition as to give his money and house to the school?"

"True, quite true, ladies; no doubt in the world the man's mad, and a downright lunatic. He fancies, too, that he has no poor relations;

why, this very morning, I heard from Nutkins, the barber, confirmed by the cordwainers, and thoroughly established by my man Peter, that he has two or three third cousins somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Welsh mountains, to whom the property would have been the greatest blessing. Well, they say true enough, once a man, and twice a child.”.

“ And what do you think ? ” said Miss Fagg, going fom the subject ; “ why, they say Mary Jones is about to leave the grocer’s, and going to be married to Green, the gardener.”

“ Quite true, quite true, ladies,” replied Mr. Bolt, “ I nearly forgot to tell you ; and here bread at tenpence a loaf ; there will be plenty for the parish to do by-and-by, I know. But, however, it is true enough ; I saw them myself walking by moonlight alone, a few nights ago, but it quite slipped my memory.”

“ Dear me, to be sure,” said Miss Tagg, “ I had nearly forgotten. Do you know, they say—but I can scarcely believe it true, and I feel so very sorry, sorry for poor, poor Mrs. Smith,—why, it is reported the servant-girl has left under peculiar circumstances. I never should have thought Mr. Smith would be guilty of such an act as that. I only hope it may be kept secret, and the disgrace prevented from spreading abroad.”

"Yes, too true, I fancy," replied Mr. Bolt. "But the worst news of all is that our poor old vicar is taken dangerously ill, and given up by the doctors. I am very, very sorry, for he was as good a man as ever broke bread; gave nearly all his living to the poor."

"Dear me!" said both the ladies; "I wonder now whom we shall have next. They say the vicar was very low church; scarcely respectable."

"Yes, but, mark me," replied Mr. Bolt, "they will have it high and dry enough next time, as I am a living sinner."

"Then you know a little of the coming proceedings?" said the ladies.

"Well, yes, I know this much, that the advowson was in the market some time since, in fact, it was sold two years ago, and purchased by a gentleman in the next parish for his nephew, a follower of Doctor Pusey and student at Oxford. You will have it high enough presently, you may be sure. I have the paper now by me with the advertisement in it, where it states that the vicar was old, about seventy years of age, and in feeble health, so that the probability was hinted at that he would not hold together long, and this, of course, enhanced the sale very much; but, 'pon my word now," continued Mr. Bolt, "it is like selling the house over one's head; it is

making too much merchandise of religion, in my simple idea."

The ladies were delighted at the prospect; there was speculation now for some time to come. Would the new priest be rich or poor? young or old? intellectual or stupid? loquacious or reserved? handsome or plain? married or single? all of which they promised to do their best in discovering.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Reform is all that's heard of late,—
Reform the Church ; reform the State.

Original.

ONE source of great annoyance to the public master lies in the absurd and vague notions some parents entertain of the principles and advantages of education ; thus, one lady called, stating that she wished her son to become a butcher ; and, as such, it would be better were he tolerably versed in some of the Continental languages ; such, for instance, as German, Dutch, and French, as cattle constantly appeared now in the market from Holland, France, and Germany ; therefore it would be a great advantage to the butcher, could he converse in the Continental tongues. “*O tempora, O mores !*” this is an odd request ; but, at any rate,” thought the master, “I'll see this young aspir-

ing butcher ;" so desired his mamma to send him, when he would pronounce on his capabilities.

It need scarcely be remarked that he proved entirely ignorant of his mother-tongue, of which fact the master took the opportunity of informing his anxious mother.

When, "Ay, ay," replied she, "he knows how to talk that well enough, but I want him to be able to jabber a bit in French, and the rest on't ; for such seems in my eye mighty clever. Two of my daughters have been to France, and they can come French for 'dinner,' 'breakfast,' 'good day,' and the rest on't, like natives. And then they are beautiful Oriental painters as well. Call up and judge for yourself," said she ; which the master promising to do, commenced at once with his new *protégé*, feeling more convinced than ever that it would be better for him—

"To leave all other tongues alone,
Till he could read and write his own."

I must likewise inform the reader, that on visiting the semi-French Oriental painters, he soon discovered that they had been in the habit of completely ignoring their own vernacular, being entirely ignorant of every rule in syntax.

Shortly afterwards, called an elderly lady—a real antiquity of bygone days. There she stood,

with large brown gingham umbrella, which would have served, if necessary, a tent for an enterprising photographer or gold-digger, being both stout and comprehensive. By her side waited a little, rough, red-headed urchin—her grandson, and whom she was about to introduce to the business of letters. On her head she wore a large fully-developed black satin bonnet, that is, one that had been black, but now a dark brown, the darker elements having been extracted by rain, sun, and air. As the master approached, she was engaged praying in her usual manner for her pet grandson, who, it appears, had been placed on fatigue, to carry the umbrella, but allowing the same to drop from his shoulder, broke one of the ribs thereof. The lad appeared to be a boy of about twelve summers, as stupid as an owl, and stubborn as a calf; and looking, as he held down his head, of all the world as if going to an execution rather than a school. "There, master," she commenced, introducing Euriah—in short, Riah, as she called him; "there, I have brought you a schollard, and no mistake. I am sorry to say it of'n, but the young rogue is up to every mischief he can lay his hands to, and I can't do much we'n. Hold your head up, Riah, and look the gemmen in the face," she demanded, the lady at the same time

scratching off his cap and pushing up his hair, giving Riah a rather wild and voracious aspect. “Yes, Sir, I am sorry to say it,” she continued, “but he’s as full of mischief and wickedness as an egg is of meat. He lies like an epitaph, steals whenever he has the chance, throws stones at all the fowls and ducks in the parish; and yesterday, as ever was, when at market, showing him Punch-and-Judy and other little amusements, the young scoundrel put his hand into my pocket, and stole my money-bag. And when I missed it, he said, ‘a man with a velvet coat on did it, and he saw him running away;’ and I never found it out until I heard he was flush, and treating all the other boys with sugar-stick and Spanish liquorice. But I found you out, found you out, didn’t I? you rogue!” said she, looking cunningly into Euriah’s face. Then turning to the master, in a very confidential manner, observed, “A mighty quick boy though, and got a very high temper too. I told’n I would send him to school for that piece of business.”

“Well, my good woman,” inquired the master, “don’t you think that it would have been better had he been sent before?”

“You see,” she replied, “I keep cows on the common, and Riah looks after them for me.”

“Well,” thought the master, “here’s a very

indifferent sheep to turn into my pretty-well organized flock again," and remembered the words of Dr. Watts :—

“ One scabby sheep infects the flock,
And poisons all the rest.”

He saw, likewise, that a very vigilant watch must be kept over this compound of waywardness and folly during his short term at school, which he felt would be very short indeed, his old granny (as he termed her) possessing very vague notions indeed of education, having sent him to school only a week or two in order to cure him of his pilfering habits.

Euriah at once commenced his games of stealing pencil, sponge, and other little articles, and toys from his schoolfellows, playing truant every day, etc. And the old lady, disapproving of the means used to the end, soon kept Euriah home, to the great relief of the master.

These, with others, could be instanced as specimens of pupils to be expected in rural schools, some of whom, after proper cultivation, however, returned an abundant harvest to the anxious pedagogue.

One day, up came Massy again, peeping into the school, being at the same time careful to escape the scrutinizing eyes of the boys, and commenced, “ Another complaint, Sir, another complaint.”

"I'm sorry for it, Massy," replied the master.

"Yes, one of your boys, with light curly hair, threw a stone at my vane, which came down the chimney into the frying-pan ; and here it is," producing it ; "and frightened my old dame, who was cooking the eggs and bacon, into fits, pretty nigh."

"You must point him out, Massy," replied the master, which, after some time attempting, he failed in accomplishing.

But during the process, his excitement having abated, he commenced, "And so you don't believe in ghosts, and all the wonderful creatures of night ; yah ! yah ! yah !"

"No, Massy," replied the master ; "I am still an infidel in that respect."

"Well, I thought I would just tell you. Last night John Morgan was terribly frightened. Crossing Three Bridges he met an animal something like a black dog, which brushed against his legs ; the muscles of his calves at once gave way ; he fell right down on his knees ; and then he smelt a strong smell of brimstone. On looking round, he saw it going pat, pat, pat, passing close to the hedge. The moon was shining at the time, but Morgan was dreadfully frightened ; his hair stood on end, as nearly to lift the cap off his head ; yah ! yah ! yah ! Now I have been told,"

continued Massy, "that some years ago a man hung himself in the tollhouse, and no doubt his spirit has been going on ever since, frightening folks ; yah ! yah ! yah !"

"Well, now, Massy," said the master, "what object do you suppose spirits would have in assuming the appearance of animals, and wandering about, frightening people."

"Well, I don't exactly know," replied he ; "but no good, I'll be bound."

"Well, Massy, to-morrow night I expect to be passing that road late, and if I see anything in the shape of dog or cat I will let you know."

"Yes, do, now ; do," replied Massy again ; "yah ! yah ! yah !"

And, sure enough, on passing the lane the said evening, and having reached within a few yards of the spot called Three Bridges, there, coming to meet him at a trotting pace, was the black dog, which proved indeed a real flesh-and-blood dog ; for, on passing the same road on the following day, and on arriving opposite the place, the master heard a dog barking vehemently in the valley below ; which, on looking over the hedge, he soon recognized as his friend of the previous night, chained to his house in a farmyard, which, on inquiry, he learnt was liberated at eight o'clock

every night to wander about the farm ; but, being a sociable dog, extended his parole, and made his way into the road, in order to hold communion with his canine friends that might possibly pass that way. Moreover, he discovered likewise that he had been suffering from mange, in consequence of which he had been placed in a pickle of brimstone ; and this accounted for the said smell.

The master told Massy the whole circumstance on the following day, on which he uttered his usual “ Yah ! yah ! yah !” ending, “ I would rather not pass that way ’t all, I can tell ye !”

The Misses Tagg and Fagg were sitting *tête-à-tête* one evening over their tea, when who should come in but Mr. Bolt. “ I am come to tell you the dreadful news,” said he ; at which both ladies stopped at once feeding the physical, in order to obtain the mental food ; “ have you not heard it ?”

“ No, that we have not,” said the ladies.

“ Well, then,” returned Mr. Bolt, “ the vicar died this morning of old age ; and the farmer’s wife and two daughters up at Ash Farm died yesterday, of black fever, they say ; yes, indeed, true enough, ladies ; Peter says so, and no doubt in the world he’s right. I am very sorry, in-

deed," he continued; "the vicar was a good and charitable man; and no one wanted a six-pence while he had a shilling, they say. It's all right, no doubt, with him, ladies, as he paid everybody, and all that; and I don't see what a man can do more." This was the extent of Mr. Bolt's theology. "As to the folks up at Ash Farm," he continued, "you know, ladies, the farmer married a gay wife, and altogether seems to have turned his head—nothing but dissipation and company for the mother and daughters, and permitted by the farmer. It appears he held a public picnic in one of his fields—dancing and all other vagaries. The ladies took cold, which brought on fever, and now are gone, poor things! The poor old vicar expostulated, it seems, with the farmer about it, when he saw the bills up advertising the proceedings; but the farmer did not like it, got very angry with the old vicar, observing he would do as he liked on his own grounds."

"Well," said the ladies, "that must have been a dreadful malignant fever."

In a few days Billy Wilks called on the master. "Dreadful, dreadful!" he commenced; "in the midst of life we are in death; so says the Book; and there is no mistake about that. Death has been busy up at Ash Farm. I am

sorry for the farmer to my heart, and must be off and see him, a solemn warning indeed to the living. But God rules over all. Amen."

Some few evenings after the stir the deaths had made in the village, Miss Fagg was sitting alone, when in came Miss Tagg. "Well, he is come, they say, our new parson ; rich, intellectual, unmarried ; complexion dark, very handsome, and young ; in fact, everything to recommend him ; only some say that he is rather too attenuated ; and, oh that he were fatter !

"Already, it appears, Miss Self has set her cap at him ; and he teas and dines frequently with her father in the front parlour ; and they are doing all they possibly can to make the dear young man feel comfortable, and forget old associations. My dear Miss Tagg, what an unspeakable amount of trouble some persons take with a fresh face ! Poor young man, I am sure I quite pity him ; I am confident he is taken by storm. He preached, too, last Sunday, and they say there was quite a large congregation, quite a flower-bed of bonnets ; and the sermon of inauguration is said to have been very pretty, very pleasant, very plain, and very short ; and after the sermon, he threw out a slight hint of taking down all the old pews, as they prevented the free circulation of the air.

"But here comes Mr. Bolt; he knows more about it, doubtless."

"Yes, yes, ladies; I know all about it—too much, indeed; pretty doings, indeed; cut down all the pews. Yes, I dare say he will; a pretty story to begin with! Why, I wonder what our fathers would say to such proceedings, should they rise from their graves? Why, it is downright sacrilege, it is. Why, didn't the bishop consecrate the whole of it to God's service? and Self, they say, is one of the foremost to alter the seats, and to aid and abet this young aspirant in his folly.

"Now, I tell you plainly, Miss Tagg and Miss Fagg, I don't very often go to church at present; but when I do, I like a place to myself where I can be easy, and enjoy the sermon without being gaped at by all the parish. Cut the pews down indeed. Self must be mad; pretty colds we shall catch in January, when the wind comes whistling through the aisles, sharp as a knife.

"Well, I tell you, ladies, if that come to pass, I'll never enter the church again. There will be a pretty storm in the parish before long; but I'll be after Self, and see if I can put the stopper on him a bit.

"Yes, ladies, you will have it high enough, and no mistake. When did you ever hear of the vicar

dreaming of such a thing? not he, indeed. Why, I shouldn't know myself. I have gazed at the old panels from a boy, no higher much than the kneeling-stool. Yes, the very panels on which my father rested his head; there's the very mark now; that's a sacred place to me, I can assure you, ladies. The man's a downright Pusey, I have no doubt of it in the world; but I will learn more of his antecedents by-and-by. Good bye, good bye."

"Really, now," commenced Miss Tagg, after Mr. Bolt had retired, "the gentleman, they say, is very kind and charitable; he spends much time and money with the poor. They say, in fact, that he never turns a case of distress from his door; so I am certain he will have enough to do, for all the parish nearly will be wearing the appearance of distress; and last night, too, in the middle of the night, he rose up from his bed, and went and administered the sacrament to poor John Thomas, who fell from a rick, and was not expected to live an hour. Surely this must be humility, sacrifice, and devotion."

"Yes," said Miss Fagg; "and I hear that all the young ladies are quite infatuated and fascinated with him, and declare him to be a most nice young man; and they are all acting as visitors, Sunday-school teachers, and church de-

corators, cloth-workers, book-markers, and everything. Then, as to the number of his prayers and sermons. Oh! dear me, that poor little bell is going ting, ting, ting, nearly the whole day, and night likewise. I really hope the young ladies are worshiping what they profess, and not something mere earthly.” And the Misses Tagg and Fagg laughed immoderately, observing at the same time, “ Poor ladies, poor ladies, what a pity it is he can only have one out of the pretty flock of innocent lambs ! When they are old, as we are, the poor giddy creatures will know better, perhaps. Oh, these men, these men ! these pet parsons ; these lords of creation, indeed, no doubt they are, for they manage the ladies of creation easily enough ; but they will know better some day than boring their eyes out making alms-bags, book-keepers, communion cloths, and all such rubbish. Dear me, dear me, how stupid, to be sure ! ”

“ And do you know,” said Miss Tagg,—“ oh ! dear me, how ridiculous to be sure, Mrs. Knight told me that Miss Self had actually been foolish enough to work him a pair of pretty slippers, with a green cross in front ; so that, when in his study, he can at once fix his eyes on that holy emblem. It really cannot be the poor children ; it must be the parents that urge on this

bachelor hunt, even into his study. Really, I think such are a disgrace to our sex; it is quite indecent. Poor girls, too, it is possible and probable that the young man is engaged to a charmer in the town he came from, and will bring her home some day, to the no small chagrin of all present."

"Well," said Miss Fagg, "I certainly pity the young gentleman likewise; he really must be nearly suffocated by the many attentions imposed upon him." So the good-natured ladies went on enjoying their discourse; but declaring they would not join the corps of parson-helpers, husband-hunters, or whatever name by which the ladies might be designated.

The clergyman was rich; and by the weak and credulous his hundreds were magnified and construed into thousands, his shillings to guineas. Rich! What a key is this word to unlock the heart of society; yea, even, sometimes the pockets of men! "Get rich," said the dying worldling, "riches cover a multitude of sins; get rich, and you will be spoken of. Your very gibes and loose expressions will be recapitulated by a host of admirers as the most original wit, the very production of true wisdom. Get rich, and you shall be courted and caressed with the most abject and cringing humility, and the most igno-

ble submission." But riches are talents lent ; giving influence and power for good or evil ; well will it be for those who have the talent that they use it properly as faithful stewards, remembering it is written, "how hardly shall a rich man enter the kingdom of God."

The young curate was rich, consequently nothing was more easy than for him to find abettors, however ultra or absurd his projects.

Mr. Bolt called again in order to bring the promised intelligence, the extra news, culled from the proper sources. "A downright Pusey, ladies, a downright Pusey," commenced Mr. Bolt ; "I thought so. I thought he was when I heard about cutting down the pews, and about bringing all the infants to be christened, and I find neighbour Self is determined to go with him."

"Well, but what is a Pusey?" inquired the ladies.

"A Pusey," said Mr. Bolt, "is a follower of one Pusey, that lives in one of the colleges, and teaches the young men all the gimcracks they are guilty of now-a-days."

"But," said the ladies, "they say he is rich, charitable, and very good. Surely he must be a Christian."

"Yes, just so ; that is it ; that's how we are undermined, thrown off our guard, as it were.

The Jesuits worked it the same in their day. Nice man, no doubt ; but I tell you, ladies, I tell you I would as soon see a viper in my path."

"Yes ; but really," said the ladies again, "he seems beloved by all the ladies, married and single ; widows included."

"Bah !" replied Mr. Bolt, "leading captive silly women, eh ! No doubt, it's true to the letter." And the ladies laughed again at Mr. Bolt's compliment to their sex.

They could not help it ; but Mr. Bolt agreed to differ on this point. He did not laugh.

Mr. William Wilks, too, was in great consternation, observing, "He had lived in the village all his life, man and boy, and now getting an old man, yet did he never see such a revolution before. Really, it was constant public excitement. As to the school, that was now done and settled, and he was satisfied it was doing a world of good in the neighbourhood, the boys getting better behaved, and not so noisy by half : the rooks, too, he observed were unmolested. But as to the Pusey doctrine, that's quite another thing, and don't know what it will come to. But one thing I know," he repeated, "it ain't orthodox ; that's clear enough ; it's not New Testament, I can see that plainly. I don't see much," he repeated, "in cutting down the pews ; they were old, and per-

haps new ones were necessary. But as to the importance of water to the face of infants dropped from his precious fingers, why, to make the best on't, it is complete humbug. Fancy rushing with infants to him just when born, lest they should die, and miss heaven: as if that holy place depended upon such a mechanical contrivance as that. I would as lief believe in the praying machines which Massy says the Tartars use, always going round, constantly turning up a prayer in order to gain heaven; that I would, now. The Almighty knows where they get it all from, I don't; 'tisn't in the Bible, I am sure. And now they have got to putting candles on the altar; and where it will end is impossible to say."

On the next occasion of Mr. Bolt calling on the ladies, they both at once commenced asking for a more definite explanation of the word Pusey.

"A Pusey, ladies," replied Mr. Bolt, "is nothing more nor less than a betrayer of his religion, and a traitor to his country. Why Charles the First lost his head for not acting half so bad as one of these heretics—a fact, ladies, I assure you. Yes, but they were reformers then, and no mistake. None of your half-and-halves, namby-pamby creatures, as now-a-days. They gave up their lives to secure Protestantism to this coun-

try. Englishmen of the nineteenth century are allowing that which cost their forefathers their blood to crumble through their fingers like sand. I tell you they are doing all they can to bring us all under the Pope again ; and speaking as I do now, I verily believe that in a few years I shall be in danger of being burnt at the stake. They are of Rome, and to Rome they'll go, as many of the breed have gone already ; and all the better too ; only I wish they would never let them return again."

Massy met Mr. Wilks in the village, when their conversation turned upon the same popular subject. "Rome, Rome, Rome!" commenced Massy, "yah, yah, yah ! I have seen it, Wilks, in France, Spain, Mexico, and other parts of America. Another name they have given it here, but I can make nothing more nor less of it than Roman Catholicism incog."

"But I don't see much," said Mr. Wilks, "in cutting down the pews."

"No, not much," said Massy ; "only more show, Wilks ; it looks better ; the building produces a better effect. It's all effect, you know ; to catch the senses, and make them believe it's the heart. All can see you pray now. It's going ahead ; it's going ahead ; yah, yah, yah ! They'll all get caught, Wilks. I shall come to

your meeting. I shall not desecrate my clarionet in such a semi-Popish place as that."

"I shall be glad to see you, Massy; glad to see you at our place next Sunday," returned Mr. Wilks.

Mr. Meadows called at the schoolhouse, observing that he felt the time had arrived for the school to be properly established, and a good thing it was that it had not slipped away; for a liberal Scriptural education was now more necessary than ever, to strengthen the judgments of the children; "for no one knows," continued he, "what dark days are coming. Get them well up in the Book," he observed, "that they may be better enabled to meet the gins and traps placed by the subtle enemy for their feet." And Mr. Meadows busied himself more than ever to combat the evil he considered to be springing up in his village.

On crossing some marsh land one foggy dark night, the master fell in with an ignis-fatuus, or Will-o'-the-wisp, as the phenomenon is termed by the country people, or at other times the Jack-o'-lantern—Jack with the lantern. This phenomenon, said to be so enticing and fascinating to the traveller, is nothing more than a combination of hydrogen and carbon in an inflammable state; but to which the country people

give supernatural power and influence, leading the unwilling traveller out of the well-beaten path, to neck-deep ponds, and even to death ; then laughing at the mischief performed on his dupe. But it had not on this occasion this influence over the pedagogue ; but there it went, hopping along over marsh and field, appearing really like a body of fire, about the size of a lantern. On returning home, the master determined on informing Massy of the phenomenon ; well knowing that he would give it a supernatural origin.

Massy devoured the information most greedily. " Ah, you saw him, did you ? yah, yah, yah ! Hopping Dick ; and a most determined radical, too, for mischief ; he's up to no good, you may feel certain of that," said he. " I would as soon see a flock of old Mother Carey's chickens on the broad Atlantic, or a singing mermaid in the Pacific ; the rogue ! Let me see, where did you say you saw him ? Yes. Now mark me, if we don't hear of a fire or some mischief in that direction before long."

" What do you suppose is the origin of this peculiar phenomenon ? " inquired the master.

" What do I think ? Yah, yah, yah ! Isn't he always found sporting about in churchyards and fairy marshes ? Won't that tell you ? He appears on the earth as the mermaid on the sea,

before a storm. I tell you it is a good thing he didn't lead you beyond come-back. I can assure you a more mischievous rogue doesn't exist on land or water in the whole supernatural than Hopping Dick. There's John Thomas can tell you more about his character than I can. One night, half seas over, returning from his friends at Moore Park, he lost his road ; and seeing a light he supposed to be a lantern, followed it about two miles, through damp and fog. He didn't want to go on ; yet he could not help it ; follow he must ; when presently splash he went bang into a deep pond of water, up to his shoulders. Yah, yah, yah ! On recovering himself he saw Hopping Dick on the other side of the pond, laughing like wickedness, as he is. Yes, now, he told me that for a gospel truth."

"Very singular indeed, Massy," replied the master. "But you don't believe all that, do you?"

"Yes, indeed I do," replied Massy. "The little imp, I say, is bent on mischief ; and lucky indeed is the man who keeps out of his supernatural influence."

In vain you attempted to reason Massy out of supernatural belief. He liked it ; but did not the one of natural phenomenon.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

“In sooth the sorrow of such days
Is not to be expressed,
When he that takes, and he that pays,
Are both alike distressed.”

Cowper.

“LEAVING all that,” said Massy, “what do you think of the old ship, Mother Church? It’s all getting too leaky for me, a deal. By-and-by there won’t be an original feature left in her, not even in the buildings,—down oak! dear old British oak, and up decaying, poor, consumptive Norwegian pine! At any rate, I and my clarionet have left, and go now to old Billy’s chapel, yah! yah! yah! Not quite so fine there, maybe, but a little of the true germ left yet.”

“And what do you think all will come to?” inquired the master.

“Come to, come to? Going, Sir. Going, Sir, gone! gone to Davy Jones’s locker. Give them

rope enough. There will be a mighty squall before long. I can see the cloud rising. A new font, new pews, new gallery, roof, and tower, eh? There's for you, and the upshot of it all will be a tremendous church-rate. Well, I won't give a farthing; I have seen too much of their tomfoolery abroad for that. They will have to take an old chair, or my hammock, or something, for I'll not give the smallest coin of the realm to such a set of greenhorns: yah! yah! yah! Such a set of empty noddles, numskulls! that don't know A from a bull's foot, and who have never learned the mere rudiments of religion."

On passing the church door the hum and laughter of human voices could be heard, mingling with the sound of saw and axe; for the work of spoliation had already commenced, and ever and anon a piece could be heard falling with a heavy crash, having been wrenched from its sturdy holdfast of centuries, and which even now resisted with a stubborn tenacity the sudden onslaught made upon its position, causing a tremendous struggle between the active and passive.

On the old Gothic door, too, was pasted the following bill:—

"We hereby give notice, that a vestry meeting will be held on the 20th instant, 10 A.M., to take

into consideration, and determine upon, a church-rate, in order to meet the necessary and unavoidable expenses incurred in modernizing and beautifying this church.

“(Signed) WILLIAM SELF,
THOMAS TURN, } *Churchwardens.*”

The Misses Tagg and Fagg, observing Billy Wilks passing, tapped the window, which summons Mr. Wilks instantly obeyed, and taking off his hat, entered the little parlour of the said ladies.

“Well, Wilks,” commenced both ladies at once, being very voracious for news that morning, “can you tell us what is going on up at the church. We are dying to know all.”

“Yes,” replied Mr. Wilks, looking on the ground and shaking his head, apparently somewhat troubled and downcast, yet at the same time gratified that he was in some measure able to satisfy the voracious appetites for information expressed by the ladies. “Ladies,” he commenced, “I am getting in years now, and have seen much of the ups and downs of life, and it would be very unbecoming of me to be uncharitable, but there is much delusion and confusion. I pray as well as my humble intellect will let me for them all, and to spare the village from entertaining such false and erroneous doctrines; but I am very, very sorry to say that I

believe now in some degree they have established auricular confession, wresting the Scriptures to their own confusion. Yes, ladies, the Book of James, where it says, "Confess your faults one to another," they misinterpret it. I have read it again and again, and I can make no more nor less of it than this, that where a Christian has wrongfully and knowingly offended any person, to such he will acknowledge his error, and make an apology, and so live in peace with all men. But who could be so wicked, so daring, as to say that it meant to stick up another poor miserable sinner like himself to whom to confess his shortcomings, making him the medium of his pardon, thereby rendering such proud and wicked in the highest degree, encouraging the utmost profanity, and robbing Christ of his glory?" .

"When Greek meets Greek, then comes the tug of war."

The news fled like wildfire. Shoemakers, with their hands under their leather aprons; tailors, slipshod, and covered with shreds, just as they left the shopboard; the barber, without his hat; Peter and Mr. Bolt, could all be observed running to the venerable building, and reading the said notice, determined on having ocular demonstration of the fact for themselves, and calculating the cost, which all decided could not be

under a thousand pounds ; and such a state of excitement ran through the village, never experienced before. One and all observing that had the old vicar originated such a foolish proposition, they should have had less objection to it ; but for this young know-nothing, with his new-found-outs, to be the instigator of such a piece of business ! The idea was truly ridiculous.

“No, no ! Messrs. Self and Turn, we will oppose you, and no mistake, when the time arrives !” said they.

The farmers, many of them, screwed the necks of their yellow money-bags tighter and tighter ; and the tradesmen locked their tills and cash-boxes closer and closer. A shyness, too, was creeping over the whole village population, that had not been felt for a quarter of a century. And why ? Because they knew that now they were about to oppose each other hand to hand ; for it must be remembered that the new plans and new faces had found their adherents, for there never was any absurdity yet promulgated that did not number its converts, and determined upholders of the same, the Mormonites and Puseyites alike. Some persons are so constituted that any new thing pleases them. They love change ; change of faces, political change, religious change, domestic change,—like the child with a new toy, which

when obtained they will as soon smash up and destroy, in order to grasp another.

The farmers met as usual at market, but the shake of the hand and the how-d'e-do's were not nearly so hearty as they were wont to be. And for what reason? Because they felt that on the 20th instant they should be opposing forces; that on that eventful 20th they should be pitted man to man.

The 20th arrived. The clerk threw open the vestry-door with a determined swing. Churchwarden Self introduced the subject, and stated, that the necessary expenses must now be met for the increased accommodation of the parishioners; and that if the proposed rate should not be carried, the Rev. Mr. Spring felt himself prepared to poll the whole parish, and very little speculation would be necessary to convince all present what the result of such a proceeding would be. "I therefore propose a rate on the parish of one shilling and sixpence in the pound," which proposition was at once seconded by Churchwarden Turn.

"Stop, stop a moment!" said Mr. Bolt, "I have an amendment to make. I propose a farthing rate," on which the official gentlemen were outvoted.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Self, "the Rev. Mr.

Spring will poll the whole parish, as there are many absent who should have been present, and many present who would have been better absent. We'll therefore send each parishioner due and sufficient notice of the day of polling."

The excitement which had reigned some time before, was now, by the proposition of the rate, and the victorious amendment by Mr. Bolt, doubly increased. Both parties betook themselves to the business of the coming poll with redoubled energy.

The opposition at once engaged a well-known young orator from London to call a meeting, and make suitable speeches in honour of glorious religious liberty, the separation of Church and State, and the downfall of Puseyism. To this young man they gave the cognomen of "Sir Isaac,"—for what reason I am at a loss to know, but certainly he was a remarkable personage; clock-like, he only required to be wound up to be set going. He was, indeed, almost perpetual motion defined. Give him but a subject, and he would tear it to tatters—badger it to shreds; whether political, religious, or local, all fared alike. At public meetings he was usually kept for the last, as children often keep their best piece of cake or pudding, in order to make up for previous deficiencies, and make a more lasting impression.

Presently, and after many speeches and much confusion and opposition, Sir Isaac, as he was termed, came forward to the edge of the platform. Now every eye of the opposition glistened with delight ; and one nudged the other, saying as he did so, “ He’ll give ’em something now, trust him. He’ll be down on ’em presently, like a thousand of bricks, and no mistake.”

The chairman introduced the speaker, *alias* Sir Isaac, as Mr. Speakwell, from London,—a well-known advocate, he remarked, of liberality of sentiment and strict religious toleration.

The orator was physically an attenuated, anxious-looking, dark young man, wearing a profusion of lank black hair ; having a quick eye, and possessing an extraordinary deal of nervous energy.

“ Friends,” he commenced, slowly and deliberately, “ I am delighted to meet you on this occasion,—the class to whom we are indebted for the food we eat, and for the clothes we wear (cheers) ; I mean the independent yeomen and farmers of Old England, to whom in a great measure we owe all our prosperity. I utter it as a great fact, without fear of contradiction, that all must commence with the tiller of the soil. (Cheers.) Gentlemen, in the cause of this worthy class I am ever ready and willing to raise my puny voice ;

especially when I see such subject to oppression, either politically, religiously, or local. (Cheers from both parties.)

"The cause I advocate to-night, gentlemen," he continued, "is glorious liberality of sentiment, more particularly as regards religious freedom. The agriculturist should be allowed freedom in every respect. His mind should be allowed to roam at large over the wide fields of politics and religion, even as his physical development rambles over his native lands and pastures. (Cheers.) Now, gentlemen, I have been given to understand that your parish is likely soon to be inundated with that new rank weed termed Puseyism ; that most deceptive, that most specious, most deadly nightshade ; but at the same time, the most brilliant, deep-dyed poppy, that could possibly raise its wanton head in the midst of human wheat.

"I could give you the history of this vulgar imposture, this spurious counterfeit, this bastard of Rome ; but time would fail me ; as you have the same, unfortunately, as I am informed, before your eyes, and practical illustrations will not be wanting.

"Puseyism, dear friends, was begotten in wantonness, and nurtured in apostasy,—a wicked subterfuge, a child of the devil [hisses, cheers,

and groans, with "Too strong, too strong ; the language is not under proper control," from the supporters of the system]. Will any one kindly inform me who and what the gentleman is who is making the most disturbance in the meeting?"

A voice : "Mr. Tyler; who is repairing the roof."

"Yes, I thought so ; thank you," said Mr. Speakwell. "His craft is in danger, eh ? No more shrines for the goddess Diana, eh ? Oh, Mr. Tyler, Mr. Tyler ! So you are come to make a noise. A pig can make a noise ; a goose can hiss ; a donkey can bray. Oh, Mr. Tyler, Mr. Tyler, I pity you, I do indeed ; for I am sure your sympathy is heartfelt."

When getting the laugh turned on Mr. Tyler, Mr. Speakwell proceeded again. "Friends," he continued, "Puseyism, I repeat, is a downward course in religion and morality ; a system got up in order to enable the stupid and un clever, the dumb dogs that cannot bark, to perform a round of childish ceremonies, pleasing to the eye of simplicity, but worse than useless ; yea, destructive to the soul ; a shadow without substance ; baubles, toys, and symbols, in the place of truth and reality.

"A few lines indited by your humble servant,

à propos to the subject, may not be amiss on this occasion. I have entitled it—

“THE POOR SHEEP’S LAMENT.

“Pray Sir, permit a starving sheep,
Who daily longs for proper keep,
To bleat a moment in your ear
Of troubles great to cause a tear!
Our pastures, Sir, are trodden down
By hirelings clothed in shepherd’s gown,
Who lead us not to living stream,
To meadows rich, or pastures green;
But feed us on dry husks;
Of High Church forms and Popish books,—
A shadow for the substance given.
An anchorite would wish for heaven.
Our ribs are peering through the skin;
Our hearts are cold; our eyes are dim;
Our fleece, that once was clean and white,
Is spotted o’er as now I write.
So starved we are with empty show
Of gewgaws, postures, bendings low,
Tonations, pictures, crosses too,
Fonts, and trumpery, we go through;
With music to subdue the stout,—
Gimeracks and child’s play throughout;
More suited to the lambs that play,
Than serious sheep to lead the way.
Our shepherd has the very mien
Of these,—a class too large I ween.
The sheep, enclosed within such fold,
Are starving fast from want and cold.

* * * * *

From such betrayers of our souls,
The very traitors of the fold,

Pray save us ! or we must be lost :
Such bulwarks can with ease be crossed.
The wolf will surely enter in,
Worry, and tear us limb from limb ;
And roaring lions, rough and grim,
The harmless sheep devour with him."

Loud and prolonged cheering.

" Well, my friends, there you have it,—*multum in parvo*," said the speaker.

" My friends," he commenced again, " the history of the Church has been always full of extravagances, and ever voracious, from its establishment to Cromwell, from Cromwell to the present moment."

And here the speaker was proceeding in rather an illiberal spirit; thinking, no doubt, at the same time, that he was the great champion of liberality of sentiment, when he was again interrupted by continued hisses.

" Take care of the man who hisses," he remarked. " The further from him the better. Don't allow him to attract attention; for peradventure he has accomplices in the room, who are actively engaged." When, having subdued his opponent, he continued sifting out the evils of the Establishment, without giving any credit for the good found in her; forgetting that the Church once stood alone in the parish, before any other sect appeared.

Surely it must have been better to have had a Church established by Government than none at all, where the ordinances of religion were carried out ; where the Bible was read, prayers offered, marriages contracted, and funerals solemnized. Surely there should be some little credit for this, in a time when the mental vision was more than dark, and education at a very low ebb. We do not wish to see the day when the Government, so long as it continues truly Protestant, shall cease to maintain, in an improved manner, a New Testament religion.

But Mr. Speakwell finished his speech by calling on all the free and independent Englishmen to make a bold stand, and in the coming local contest to strain every legitimate nerve in opposing the rate.

Our friends Bolt, Massy, and Wilks could be seen, and occasionally heard at the meeting ; Billy Wilks interrupting with his "That's it ! that's it ! that's the way !" and "There you got it !" And so on.

In allusion to the superstitions of Puseyism, Massy was heard ejaculating his usual "Yah, yah, yah !" and "That's just how they go it in Mexico, Spain, and other parts !"

Others of our friends were there likewise, and were pleased to hear the speaker declare that a

general Scriptural education was the best antidote for the great error of the day.

The Misses Tagg and Fagg were on thorns for information from their indefatigable Mr. Bolt, who attended the meeting likewise, not so much to consent or dissent, as to have a subject for speculation and comment with the ladies. Accordingly the next morning, and as early as possible, he called in order to deliver the budget of the past evening.

"Just as I expected, just as I expected," he commenced ; "a regular uproar. Upon my word now, if the village isn't coming to something ! It is nothing but hammer and tongs one against the other. I am terribly afraid that all the 'new light' will turn out complete darkness after all. I tell you what, Miss Tagg and Miss Fagg, I don't like these noisy demonstrations—it's all jaw and law. If they will go on peaceably and neighbourly, I am with them. But when they come to cut each other up root and branch, I am away. They have allowed the Rev. Mr. Spring to go on much too far, that I know ; but the horse is fairly out of the stable, it is too late to shut the door ; they can try if they like, but the business is done. I like things to go on, I say, in a quiet, easy way. I shall have very little now to say with respect to it. I know the

church will be cold in winter ; I know how the wind will sweep through the aisles. But the business, I say, is done, and there is no help for it ; and I hate democratic meetings. I expect there will be a tremendous tussle on polling-day ; I hope no broken heads. If it were to be so, it would not be the first time on such an occasion. There are the squires Temple and Bragg too. If the young parson gets hold of them, they will influence nearly the whole of the voters, and no mistake ; and there's little doubt but he will really do it."

" Mr. Bolt," replied the ladies, " I really hope it will not be so bad as you anticipate. Mr. Self called the other day, and says that the Rev. Mr. Spring is a most delightful young man, and feels quite sorry to coerce the parishioners. But he really must have the church beautified, as at present it is quite a discredit to the parish, and a disgrace to the service of God. Really, now, Mr. Bolt," said Miss Fagg, " perhaps the good gentleman is not so culpable as some folks make him out."

" Oh no, perhaps not ; perhaps not, ladies ; a mighty nice man, no doubt, in some things, and a terrible lady-killer !" said Mr. Bolt. " They are all going over very fast ; and I suppose some of them will influence their poor nose-led hus-

bands, till they all get into his net together. I fancy how he laughs in his sleeve at the easily-caught pigeons."

Mr. Bolt was not far out in his speculation respecting the coercion of the landlords, the Rev. Mr. Spring having written to each of them, expressing his anxiety for the ultimate result of the poll, and his great love for the Church,—hoped they would use their superior influence in a gentle manner, in order to ensure a successful termination to the coming contest. After which the said gentleman wrote to their respective stewards, desiring them to send a letter to each of the tenants on the subject.

Squire Bragg wrote as follows :—

"SIR,—You will use all speed and acquaint my tenants under your charge, that it is my desire to support the Rev. Mr. Spring at the coming contest. I cannot, of course, openly coerce in this matter, but should like all to uphold the rate. Be careful to inform me, therefore, who opposed the same.

"Yours, etc.,

"S. BRAGG."

Squire Temple wrote to his steward as follows :—

"SIR,—As very shortly there will be a contest

in the parish respecting a church-rate, will you immediately inform all under your supervision that I should without any hesitation vote in support of the required sum.

“Yours, etc.,

“W. TEMPLE.”

“P.S.—Observe who opposes.”

The visits and letters of the stewards produced a wonderfully paralysing effect on many of the opposition, some of whom at once drew back, and walked no more openly in the contrary direction. They felt, of course, that an effort was made to curb their liberty of conscience and action. They felt that even in this boasted land of freedom, they were in this respect little better than vassals. “What has he to do with me?” said one, in allusion to his landlord. “I pay my rent, tithe, and taxes to the day.” But again recollecting himself, “Yes,” said he, “he has to do with me—opposition—then the result.” Then looked round on his dependants—wife, children, aged parents, and others. So on the day of polling, many had the submissive ordeal to pass through, of recording their votes in opposition to the dictates of conscience; and, worse than this, in order to support the great error of the day, they felt, of course, as men should feel under such circumstances. Still they sacrificed freedom of

soul to physical ease, seeing that by opposition they were liable to lose their position ; others, less scrupulous, stepping up to fill their places at the grange or lodge.

" My dear Miss Fagg," commenced Miss Tagg, " do you know that that horrid-looking man with the scar on his cheek, and with that dreadful murderous countenance, has made his appearance in the village again. Do you know that I almost shuddered when I met him. I always feel relieved when I hear that that man has left the place. I can assure you I have a very unpleasant presentiment with respect to that man. They say he comes from no one knows where, and goes away again quite as mysteriously. Sometimes he is in affluent circumstances ; then, again, poor as a church-mouse. Who knows how the man lives ? I should not be at all astonished to hear of his having been taken into custody one day by our constable. Yet, poor foolish folks ! when he kept two hunters at the ' Royal Oak,' and paid court to the landlord's daughter, and was almost or quite accepted by the family. Dear me, how easily people are deluded. Perhaps the man, after all, is no better than a vagrant, and does not live so honestly. Really, I would not have him in my house for all the gold of Mexico."

"Yes, indeed," said Miss Fagg; "things are much altered since I was young. My parents' great anxiety was to keep me at home, and not put me off on the first comer. And my father always said that thirty was quite early enough for any young lady to get into the cares and troubles of married life. And oh, Miss Tagg," continued the loquacious lady, "have you heard of it? have you heard the news? Why, they say old Mr. Toms is about to take to the altar young Miss Swan; quite an altar, indeed, for her, poor young thing! Quite a sacrifice, and no mistake in the world about it. Well, I am sure, it is once a man and twice a child, or why does he wish for a companion, a mere child; a girl of eighteen, indeed? Love, indeed! love an old infirm man that quite totters as he walks! They say it is his money she is going to marry. I am sure he should have thought of marriage before this. I am certain his short time on earth should be spent thinking of the next world, and not settling down in this. I am sure, had it not been told me for a gospel truth, I could just as soon have believed that our old friend Bolt had placed his foolish head into the wedding-noose." At which idea both the ladies laughed heartily at Mr. Bolt's expense.

As the day of polling arrived, the opposing

forces trebled their energies. *Aides-de-camp* were dispatched from head-quarters to every voter in the parish, to canvass or learn their individual dispositions, each party jeering the other as they met at the house of a voter, and calling forth some irritating thought or expression that had lain dormant for a lengthened period, but now brought forth as suitable ammunition and missiles for the occasion. The polling-day arrived. The churchwardens were up betimes, pressing into their service market-carts, old gigs, and every available horse, in order to drag to the poll young and old, halt and blind; and even the infirm and bedridden were alike brought forth to record their name or mark in the support of the Rev. Mr. Spring and Wardens.

The opposite party, the independent few, too, were not a whit behind in their arrangements. Their vehicles frequently stopped the way, and at an early hour could be seen thronged with white and blue gabardines; and as the opposing forces passed each other a wild yell of excitement escaped from each conveyance, some of which bore rough-looking banners, inscribed with "Spring for ever! the Church shall flourish!" etc.; while others, the opponents, "Down with Puseyism! Liberty, the People's Right," etc., painted in red letters on a white ground. But

in the midst of this excitement and uproar some were seen sitting on the sides of the carts, gloomy, and evidently passive spectators ; they were the coerced. No exclamation proceeded from them ; no jeer, no cheer. They felt themselves mere chattels ; deprived of liberty of thought and speech, they were fast losing self-respect.

But now, as the alcoholic drinks and narcotic fumes, with other stimulants, so liberally bestowed, commenced having the desired effect, and as evening drew on, incoherent sounds were constantly heard, mingled with “ Spring for ever ! Hurrah, for our pa’son ! We have beaten them to-day ! Holler, boys ! holler ! We be the pa’son’s chaps ! We be the boys for ye, what d’e say ? Say it isn’t so, and I’ll fight you in one minute. I say our pa’son and we have beat you holler ! We have beat you by chalks. He’s the boy for the chink, d’e see ! We have had the rate, and no mistake ; and by gore, now, I’ll fight any one—man, woman, or child—that says we shan’t. We’ll have a new spire, and a new baby-washer, for all your long-drawn ten-commandment faces. I say the pa’son for ever, and here’s a chap that will fight any one that says down wi’un.”

“ Then I say down we’n, and your infernal church-rate too ! ” replied an opponent ; and so many fights commenced and ended in this way.

It is quite true that in ignorant minds the supposition was, that the clergyman had beaten. Still, on the minds of the thoughtful few, it must have appeared that the contrary was the case, and that he was in reality the loser. Had he not lost ground in his spiritual duties? Had not his usefulness been neutralized by these proceedings? Judge ye, impartial observer! Was this the right position for the messenger of peace to find himself in? Could it be said of such, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who bringeth glad tidings of peace?" Had he not rather been the element of war, discord, and strife; and such a war, too, that had not raged in the parish for ages? The parish divided, friends turned foes, and perhaps such would continue to be the case until that generation should pass away. Would the jeers and blows be forgotten? No; for there, in the centre of the parish, stood the cause of the discord, but which, on the contrary, should have been the element of unity, peace, and love.

When will the professed ministers of Christ learn and teach the gospel of peace? When will they learn that they are not under law, but under grace? When will they learn to live above the secular, the temporal, and soar to the spiritual? When will they learn to be like their great Mas-

ter, who, when He was reviled, reviled not again ; when threatened, threatened not ? When will they be the centres of light and love in the parish, and not the origin of contention ? Would such scenes as those meet the eyes and disgust the ears, were this the case, rendering religion a bye-word, a scandal, and a scoff, entirely through its misguided apostles ?—

“ From such apostles, O ye mitred heads,
Preserve the Church, and lay not careless hands
On skulls that cannot learn and will not teach.”

CHAPTER XXIX.

“ Quoth one, a rarer man than you
In pulpit none shall hear ;
But yet, methinks, to tell you true,
You sell it plaguy dear.”

Cowper.

LOOKING at the long-vexed question of church-rates with an impartial eye, it must be seen that, like every subject of contention, both parties have been more or less in fault. During the before-mentioned struggle, it was the schoolmaster's great happiness to be exempt from taking any active part in the contest, either offensive or defensive, being at that time in that blissful state of exemption from all such taxes, viz. the state of “ bachelorhood,” his establishment consisting of only a part of a house presided over and belonging to a dear elderly, comfortable widow, in whose keeping he was considered, by the friends, out of every danger a bachelor could

possibly be subject to ; in consequence, as before observed, he was not considered qualified to vote, therefore moved between the contending parties an element of neither good nor ill. But with respect to the question before us, there is little doubt that a miserable want of forethought has been exhibited, and a most blind policy followed, in the exaction and extraction of church rates ; producing more enemies to the Church in rural places than any other cause whatever ; the little good obtained with this forced assistance being entirely swallowed up and rendered neutral by the amount of evil produced by their collection, by constantly giving the opponents the ready handle for raising the cry of, “The Church is in danger !” Would it not be far more wise to leave the repairs of the church to the voluntary contributions of the parish ? There is little doubt but all would feel too interested in the venerable pile, to allow the same to crumble into decay ; too many interesting associations are connected with the old building for this. Was it not there that they were named, married, and some, alas ! buried ? Then, again, the architectural ornament it is to the parish ; the man must be dead of soul indeed, who would wish to see such a building falling into decay. Could it be managed in this way, what an amount of heartburn-

ings and ill-feeling the neighbourhood would be spared ! But we must not, we will not blame any individual for resisting, in every legitimate manner possible, the introduction of Puseyism into a parish, a system known to be on the threshold of Rome, or why do so many of its adherents leave the Church of their fathers, and at once plunge and submerge themselves into Popery, by which they prove themselves far more noble and honest than others, who, while they sap her very foundation, destroy her very vitals, eat the bread of the Reformed Church ? Such cannot, must not be tolerated under any pretence whatever. Englishmen must not be mealy-mouthed in this matter ; to save the Church they must speak right out; and oppose a system so false and dangerous. Let us support no halfway house to Popery ; Popery is increasing too rapidly, far too rapidly already. God help us ! let us look well to the betrayers of our religion, the traitors of our country, ere it's too late. Already in this country temples of every description dedicated to the scarlet impostor are raising by thousands their wanton proportions. Not only in the capital of the empire, but in provincial towns, a too secure footing has been gained. At Kensington, the confessional is already open for the delusion of poor ignorant

souls. Surely the spirit of the reformers who shed their blood for the simple Protestant faith must have died out, or their sons would never have permitted such innovations ; but so it is. Reader, let us beware !

After the defeat at the poll, the friends returned to their homes, and every one felt, as Massy expressed it, "that the devil would have his way for a time ; and very likely," he continued, "Popery would soon overrun the whole island, as he had seen it in France, Spain, Italy, South America, and other countries, in which places he had been an eye-witness to its impoverishing, demoralizing, and wretched effects. There is no country," said he, "that is well to do where that religion shackles and deludes the mind and cramps the energies of the people ; and Puseyism," he added, "is nothing more nor less than Popery *incog.*"

And so, as before seen, Massy went regularly to Billy Wilks's chapel, and pitched the tunes with his clarionet, observing as he did so, "that a change of diet was sometimes an advantage, either mental or physical : yah ! yah ! yah !"

But Billy Wilks frequently observed to his friend Massy, "that it was high time he left off seeking fresh religious excitements ;" he must, he told him, "leave it off, as he had left off the

sailor and soldier," and advised him "not to be too fond of changing his religion, as it was not good for the spiritual constitution."

Mr. Bolt was assiduous in comparing notes with the Misses Tagg and Fagg, and declared to the ladies "that he did not intend going to the church again, as he had a cold already, and no religion called upon him to sacrifice life; therefore," he added, "he should give it up at once :" in which both ladies concurred.

"Do you know, Mr. Bolt," commenced Miss Tagg, "I have been reading in the papers of a burglary, and that they have taken up a man on suspicion having a scar on his right cheek. I really believe that it is the same individual that, swallow-like, frequently visits this village; I never considered him of any good; light come, light go. See how, for a time, he kept servants, hunters, dogs, and the rest; and then again suddenly poor, and so poor that he had to borrow a pound or two of the landlord with whom he was lodging."

"Yes," said Miss Fagg, "how foolishly too people really are, to be sure; why, here, in this case, some actually encouraged the thought of having him for a son-in-law, poor, poor, blind things! I declare, it is only for some poor adventurer to make his appearance, and down he

goes, without any scrutiny whatever. I don't know what our mothers would have thought of this generation, poor dears." And so the ladies proceeded in conversation and speculation with Mr. Bolt, with whom we shall now leave them.

Winter had set in. His chilly breath had stopped the murmuring rills, and sealed the larger rivers and ponds ; the pretty birds, too, had hushed their varied melodies, and cold and mopish, with ruffled feathers and melancholy mien, perched on the leafless branches or twigs, awaited the kind hand of benevolence to scatter a few crumbs, or the occasional drift from the thrasher's flail ; in flocks too they assembled, in order to cheer and encourage each other during their deep privations. And here is a lesson for man ; not to forsake his fellows in the day or hour of trial, but, on the contrary, to be more than ever united. Unity is strength, saith the proverb. Berry-eating and aquatic birds were likewise arriving in flocks, driven from their northern ice-bound coast to this, to them, for a time, a city of refuge ; and the thoughtless sportsmen were busily engaged, taking advantage of their humbled position to thin their ranks. The cattle and horses, brought in from their snow-covered fields, were warmly bedded under their accustomed sheds. And the sheep were the especial object of the shepherd's

care during the inclement season. All was cold and quiet without, for winter reigned in all his robust strength. The rich shut themselves up with their comforts. The poor were not so well situated; but the poor labourer, as he looked through his diamond panes, was cheered and encouraged by one little visitor and fellow-sufferer, who sat on one of the twigs of the apple-tree, and in the midst of all that was discouraging and desolate around, poured forth, and in lively strains, a cheering melody—yes, in winter too, as well as autumn and spring, the robin comes—and around the poor man's cottage, patiently awaits the scattered few crumbs, and thanks him in return. Pretty songster, I love thee too! and although many have addressed thee in poetic strains, I will do thee a moment's honour likewise.

“ Welcome little warbler, come
And cheer my winter's dreary home.
In summer thou art wont to roam
In woody groves to rear thy young ;
In winter change thy hermit plan,
And come and live with social man,
To feed upon his bounteous store,
And ask for pittance at his door.
I hear thy voice, melodious sound !
Echoing all my dwelling round.
Were it not for thee, in rural life
Should dread dull winter to invite
But thou art with it, and in time
To chant a pretty Christmas rhyme.

Then come to my window, flee not away,
I'll feed thee liberal every day ;
My roof shall guard thee from the cold,
Till summer come, and winter old
Return no more!"

The poor of the village were not entirely neglected or forgotten at this inclement and hungry season, although the manner of mutually giving charities was materially altered. Mr. Bolt, however, as usual, bought up the coarser pieces of beef, and directed his old housekeeper to make it into soup, and distribute alike to all comers, irrespective of creed or doctrine. The produce, also, of the two cows he likewise devoted to the same purpose.

Mr. Meadows and Mr. Wilks had likewise subscribed for the usual supply of coals ; but after all, there was an absence of unity, cordiality, and friendly feeling in the good cause, and as a necessary consequence the poor of the parish suffered considerably. It is true that at the head of the lists stood the names of squires Bragg and Temple, as before ; but there was an absence of the warm-hearted, hard-working middle class ; and occasionally, too, it oozed out that in order for persons to be the recipients of the bounty, it was necessary that they should be in the habit of attending the church.

And so things progressed through the season

of winter. Mr. Self managed to get his name in the local paper as a great sportsman,—a mighty Nimrod,—he having, as stated, been fortunate enough to bag a goose and three foxes at one shot, which happened, it appeared, merely by chance. Mr. Self having been in pursuit of wild geese in a lonely and craggy spot on the sea-coast, and when in his hiding-place watching for the aquatics an old she-fox, probably bent upon the same errand, and followed by her too-thoughtless cubs, came in a line between Mr. Self and the geese, when Mr. Self fired, and the result was as stated in the local news. Of course, with the rural population and sportsmen, this served as a topic for conversation for some little time. Indeed, as the local paper remarked, such a phenomenon was never heard of before, and would render Mr. Self an object at once of notoriety and envy in the sporting world.

At the church all was life and activity. Services commenced at 8 A.M., and ended at 8 P.M. during the Christmas week. Ladies—delicate ladies—could be seen, early and late, wending their way, knee-deep in snow, to the house of prayer. The church, too, was decorated, and the school children feasted with no sparing hand. Indeed, the works were very great.

Miss Tagg's nephew, from London, paid her a

visit during the festive season ; and as he usually dressed in patent-leather boots, long black coat, and clerical neck-tie, some considered him a Roman Catholic priest in disguise ; others, however, more certain and sagacious, declared him to be a real Pusey, as that was the very dress they wore about London. But Mr. Rare was neither of the two. He was merely a young aspirant, determined on astonishing the country folks, and in which he succeeded admirably, even to his own personal annoyance, being frequently obliged to take refuge in some cottage, and make his exit at the back door, from the gaze of the village youngsters, who constantly hunted him to earth, declaring him a real Pusey, and not unfrequently chased him to his aunt's, and then even dared to look through the window after their new friend. The young ignoramuses really did all this, which, Mr. Rare told his aunt, with a blush and exaggerated phraseology, awfully annoyed him.

Now Mr. Rare was a young man, in the habit of seeing very small things in an awful light ; thus, if his foot erred out of the right direction in the smallest manner, he would say, "I gave my foot an awful wrench." Mr. Rare, no doubt, was troubled with diseased nerves, which made little things appear awful things. Another fond and pet word of Mr. Rare's was "thundering;"

thus, he sometimes enjoyed a thundering jolly appetite, by which he devoured a thundering tea, for which he felt a thundering deal stronger. Indeed, the awfuls and thunderings which he subjected his aunt to during his short visit quite affected her nerves. "For," as she remarked, "she was quite unaccustomed to that gentlemanly way of talking. Really," she said, "she quite pitied the young man" as he marched out of the door one day in order to sport his figure and measure his distance in the fields and lanes.

Now no one loves a joke,—a practical joke, too,—more than your countryman, and at that time a Londoner was as great a novelty in the country as a wild swan in winter or a nightingale in summer. A cockney they considered as belonging to a sort of middle sex, that couldn't talk plain, and whom they delighted in making feel uncomfortable; and his speech, called by them cockney talk, they despised as contemptible, observing that Johnny Walker did not pronounce his words like that, nor the pa'son on Sundays, who at the same time had been at Oxford or Cambridge. So they considered it a fanciful way of talking, not owned by any lexicographer or learned man in the kingdom.

The farmers, too, delighted in bringing Mr. Rare out a little, as they called it, and invited

him to their homesteads to enjoy a day's sporting or riding, on which occasion they provided their visitor with the roughest horse they could get and the most recoiling gun they could find; or on another occasion challenge him to jump the highest hedge or widest ditch, in order, as they said, to spile his French leggings, which Mr. Rare succeeded in doing more than once.

But Mr. Bolt was most disgusted by Mr. Rare favouring the French in dress. Looking at his trousers one day, "Bah!" said he, "what do you want to be taken for—a fool of a Frenchman? I have known the day that an Englishman would as soon have put his head into a rope as his legs into things like that, giving him the appearance of a Frenchman. Englishmen were Englishmen then, and no mistake, and no half-and-half; but young Londoners seem to be right up to tomfoolery, mythinks."

"Mr. Bolt," said Mr. Rare, "you are an awful, thundering, impertinent old fella, to find fault with my Parisian unmentionables in that free and unguarded manner."

"Well, don't you see," said Mr. Bolt, "it does so vex me to see young men so after dress. It does not matter much what young women do; they may have every fancy; they are the fancy part of creation. But men—Englishmen, should

be more solid and strong-minded. The men, you know, Mr. Rare, are to keep up the dignity of the nation ; the ladies are for ornament.”

Mr. Bolt, observing the young man felt hurt at his remarks, said, “Never mind, young man, you know I am getting in years. You don’t know me very well. Good bye, I hope no offence !”

When gone, the young man turned to his aunt, and observed, “What a thundering, awful, old fool that is !” and in a few days afterwards packed up his portmanteau, and started for London, “glad,” as he observed to his aunt, “to escape from such a thundering awful place.”

“Peace ! peace societies ! yes, we all like peace,” said Mr. Bolt, as he entered Miss Tagg and Fagg’s. “I tell you what, Miss Tagg and Fagg, I like the Quakers very much ; they wear a broad-brimmed hat and upright collar, and all that ; but as to their peace notions, I don’t know much about. My idea of keeping peace is to be prepared for war. Why, when my man Peter is off the watch, the young thieves steal my apples ; but when the watch is kept they are safe. But, by the bye, how’s the young Londoner ?”

“Gone, gone ; quite gone,” said Miss Tagg. “Really, Mr. Bolt, we like our friends very well ;

but these very heavy expressions made me feel quite nervous."

"Yes, well, I hope I didn't frighten him away, that's all," said Mr. Bolt. "Well, as I was going to say, Miss Tagg and Miss Fagg, they are going to hold a peace meeting. What good is it to be crying peace, I should like to know, when there is no peace. I tell you, ladies, it is necessary to make peace sometimes by going to war. Look in the time of Bonnie, how he went on; what a disturbance he created, until we went to war and caged that fighting-cock. And so it will be. These peace societies' principles are bad, I say, to instil into the minds of young Englishmen. It is teaching them to rest on the laurels of their fathers, and losing their own."

And now, with the reader's permission, we must leave the ladies and gentleman discussing the subject of peace societies—a meeting coming off in the village. Just at this time, however, the schoolmaster being suddenly called away from the scene, the result of that meeting I cannot inform the reader; but some years afterwards, when visiting the village, Bob found that our old friend Billy Wilks had departed this life at the age of seventy-three, having only kept his bed two or three days, the last day of which he called for

his will, and, putting his finger on "Rookery Cottage," written in large text, "that's it, that's it ; right, sure enough," said he ; and reclining on his arm, peaceably expired.

He likewise called upon old Massy ; his old dame had left him some two years before, and with her died the annuity ; in consequence of which, the basket trade had to be prosecuted more than ever. "She had been breaking up her timbers very fast some weeks before," said Massy ; "at last, one dark November night, she foundered ; but no doubt she is now exploring all the other worlds ; yah ! yah ! yah ! And I hope soon to set sail too. I am getting my canvas ready, as well as such an old craft can, encumbered with such an old hulk ; and then I hope to flit from star to star, planet to planet, and world to world ; yah ! yah ! yah !"

Mr. Meadows still continued to exert his influence over the institution, in which he felt more and more interested ; and many had grown up around him, who did not forget to thank him for his disinterested kindness ; so Giles at the plough, and Sally at the churn, thanked Mr. Meadows that they had got on a bit, that they had a bit of learning, and could send sweet and long epistles to brothers and sisters, or to persons even more dear, who had pushed their fortunes

in the far West or further antipodes, and all of it known only to themselves, a stranger not meddling therewith; as in the time of their fathers, when they desired to send intelligence.

Mr. Bolt was failing in his office of scout, and progressed now by the aid of a stout stick. The Misses Tagg and Fagg were still *au fait* at the business of investigation, etc., complaining occasionally, however, of the want of accuracy in Mr. Bolt's information.

The Rev. Mr. Spring had married a lady from whence he came, thereby disappointing many of the village aspirants to the self-denying office of pastor's wife. The bell still continued its invitations; but the excitement caused by the religious innovations had long passed away, and with it many of the excitors; so that now the Rev. Mr. Spring progressed in his semi-papal doctrines without much molestation. He never attempted another church-rate, however, as the stir caused by enforcing the first was not yet forgotten or lost upon him.

And now to sum up the previous portions of these 'Reminiscences,' we must just state that Mr. Tom Brunt, in consequence of the death of his father, left Old Farm, and was living in the county town, following the occupation of a merchant, beloved and respected by all. Severa

little Brunts, too, were running about, riding on ponies, or playing cricket in the orchard. The boy Jones was tenant at Old Farm, and a great favourite with his landlord. Molly, faithful Molly, was no more. She had lived some time at Old Farm, feeble and inactive, on the bounty of her kind master and mistress ; but having heard that another sister in the neighbouring parish was dead and buried, she remarked, “Poor folks have no friends to lose,” and immediately expired. Snipp still continued following the business that the only certain thing in life renders profitable ; and occasionally hearing Mr. Clearview’s sermons, which continued as orthodox and evangelical as ever.

Mr. John died some seven years after the birth of “Little Uncertainty ;” but now that latter young gentleman filled his father’s position ; and, like him, paraded “Wisdom’s Acres ;” the great man, his neighbour, constantly trying to allure him into selling the property. The girls were all married, many young men having fallen in love with them or theirs, until their Ma”deemed it prudent to get them matched. She herself, however, never in wantonness married again, although the common brewer, her neighbour, looked frequently in her direction ; but prudently considering that his gain would be in some re-

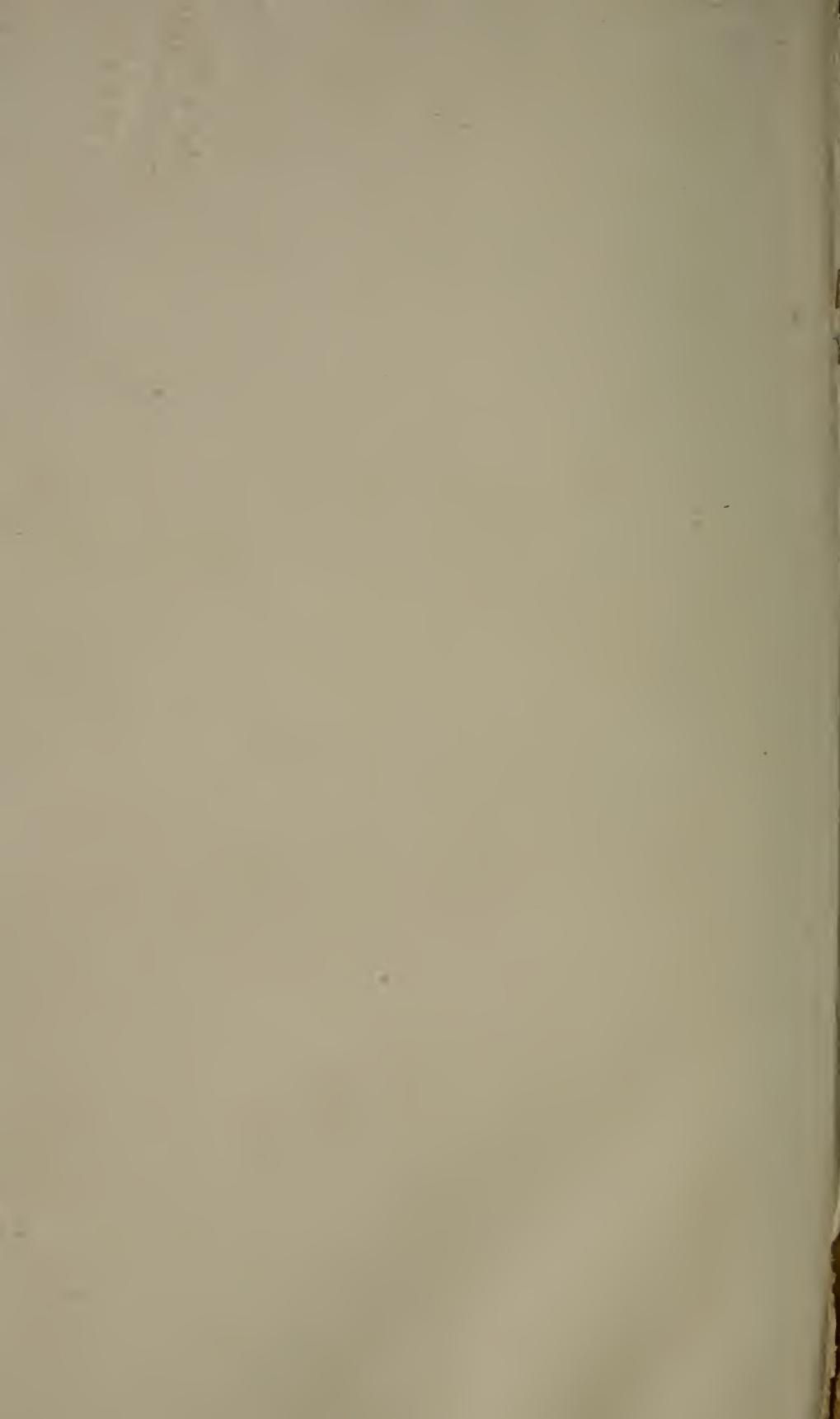
spects her loss, carefully abstained from making any decided offer of marriage. And now, aged and infirm, Mrs. S. was living with one of her married daughters—the one whom she considered the most genteel. And so, gentle reader, with a hearty farewell, I conclude these few imperfect 'Reminiscences ;' patient and gentle indeed I must designate you ; if you have followed me to—

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